SOCRATIC SELF-KNOWLEDGE IN PLATO'S POLITICS AND DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION

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LAY ABSTRACT:

Two key conclusions of this dissertation are that Socratic self-knowledge has a political application essential to Plato's politics, and that Plato is wrong about the necessary socio-political results of this kind of epistemic self-awareness. Although Plato seems to assume that widespread epistemic self-awareness would necessarily result in his ideal technocratic aristocracy, I argue that the knowledge of what we know and do not know could be beneficial to collaborative, democratic deliberation. By accepting that we ourselves do not know all there is to know about any possible political decision, and that others may have important relevant knowledge, we will become more likely to engage as collaborators rather than as adversaries and to consider other perspectives and positions more seriously. In the conclusion, I suggest some possible avenues for further research into the application of these ideas in modern democratic theory.

ABSTRACT:

Socratic self-knowledge is rarely examined through the lens of politics. In this dissertation, I will make three main arguments relating to the social and political application of Socratic self-knowledge and its possible practical benefit for modern liberal democracy. These arguments will address the role of Socratic self-knowledge in Plato's political philosophy, how Plato applies Socratic self-knowledge in his political work, and how it could benefit an inclusive deliberative democracy, rather than lead to Plato's ideal epistemic aristocracy.

In the first chapter, I argue that Socratic self-knowledge is a cornerstone of Plato's political philosophy. This includes comparing similar concepts, although not always using the explicit language of "self-knowledge," throughout the Platonic corpus. In the second and third chapters, I examine the types of persuasion that Plato critiques and seems to endorse and how virtuous or artful rhetoric is applied in the *Republic* and *Laws*. I argue that Plato applies the concept of artful rhetoric established in the *Phaedrus* to the imagined societies of the *Republic* and *Laws*, in part, to produce the same political results that a society with genuine widespread Socratic self-knowledge would produce, without cultivating genuine self-knowledge in the citizenry.

The fourth chapter argues against Plato's position that that a society with widespread self-knowledge would result in a technocratic aristocracy as he seems to assume in the *Charmides*, *Republic*, and, to a lesser extent, the *Laws*. Instead, I argue that a cultural value of epistemic self-awareness would be a great benefit to collaborative deliberation. By accepting that we ourselves do not know all there is to know about any possible political decision, and that others may have important relevant knowledge, we will become more likely to engage as collaborators rather than as adversaries and to consider other perspectives and positions more seriously.

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Introduction

Socratic self-knowledge is a perennial point of interest in Platonic scholarship, but it is rarely examined through the lens of politics.[1] Self-knowledge is often understood as an epistemic or metaphysical issue, associated with introspection, intellectual humility, second-order knowledge, and the constitution of the psyche. To the extent that it is understood as a practical concern, discussion of Socratic self-knowledge tends to remain limited to the individual. The practical questions about Socratic self-knowledge usually concern how self-knowledge is attained and the effects it has on the individual psyche. In this dissertation, I will make three main arguments relating to the social and political application of Socratic self-knowledge and its possible practical benefit for democracy. These arguments will address how Plato utilizes Socratic self-knowledge in his political philosophy, the distinct types of persuasion that Plato critiques and endorses, and why widespread Socratic self-knowledge does not necessarily lead to Plato's ideal epistemic aristocracy.

In the first chapter, I argue that Socratic self-knowledge is a cornerstone of Plato's political philosophy. Socratic self-knowledge is usually associated with Plato's earlier Socratic dialogues, especially the *First Alcibiades*, *Apology*, and *Charmides*. The *Apology* uses the phrase "human wisdom" (*anthrōpinē sophia*) to describe Socrates' state of knowing what he knows and

[1] Much has been written on the topic of Socratic self-knowledge. Some key discussions I rely on throughout this work include: Annas (1985), who distinguishes between ancient and modern senses of self-knowledge with the modern being more concerned with discovering the true personality of the individual. Moore (2015), who provides a systematic examination of self-knowledge across Plato's dialogues as well as in Aristophanes and Xenophon. Moore provides three theses regarding the nature of self-knowledge in Plato: the metaphysical, which concerns self-constitution, the epistemic, in which the self becomes a proper object of knowledge, and the practical, which mainly concerns how self-knowledge arises, namely through conversation with others. Kamtekar (2017), who distinguishes between the knowledge concerning one's own state of knowledge or ignorance and knowledge regarding one's own capacities and nature. Avnon (1995) and Rappe (1995), who examine how the Socratic elenchus aims to raise epistemic self-awareness in Socrates' interlocutors.

does not know, or, as he states it in the negative "I do not think I know what I do not know" (*Ap*. 21d7).[2] The *Alcibiades* examines the idea of self-knowledge in practical terms when Socrates states that "the errors in our conduct are caused by this kind of ignorance, of thinking that we know when we do not know" (*Alc*. 117d8-9). Since people who know and people who are aware that they do not know do not misjudge their abilities, only those who are mistaken about what they know err in their actions.

The *Charmides* provides a bridge from the earlier Socratic dialogues to Plato's later works and political philosophy. There, Plato not only explores the idea of self-knowledge, but also has Socrates imagine a dream society organized by the principle of knowing what one knows and does not know (*Ch*. 173a-d). This is a society in which everything is done in accordance with kinds of knowledge or sciences (*epistēmas*). In this society, no one would claim to have knowledge that they do not have, nor could they get away with such a claim, everyone would be in better health, and everything would be skillfully made. Socrates' dream society in the *Charmides* appears very similar to the organization of Kallipolis in the *Republic*, which is based on a division of labor and the principle of specialization. The *Republic* relies upon the principle of specialization to ensure that no one in the society pursues any action for which they are unqualified. In books 8 and 9 of the *Republic*, we see that when people do take on other tasks, especially in the realm of political decision making, the society begins fall out of balance toward tyranny. The organization of the committees, councils, courts, and assemblies in the *Laws* reflects the political division of labor and is based on certain epistemic, moral and experiential qualifications. This division of political labor and decision making in the *Laws* is far less strict

[2] "*ha mē oida oude oiomai eidenai*" My Greek transliterations will be based on the Oxford Classic Text editions of Plato's corpus, edited by John Burnet, 1905.

than in the *Republic*, but the basic premise of limiting peoples' power to act without appropriate epistemic and moral qualifications still stands.

Although, as I will argue, Socratic self-knowledge remains a constant theme in Plato's work, we see a shift in Plato's approach to encouraging Socratic self-knowledge in others between the earlier Socratic dialogues and the middle and later political works.[3] In the earlier dialogues, we see Socrates attempting to raise the epistemic self-awareness of his interlocutors by revealing their own cognitive dissonance and encouraging them to resolve it through further examination. This revelation of psychological strife should allow the interlocutor to understand that they do not in fact know what they thought they knew, thus bringing them closer to Socratic self-knowledge. Once the interlocutor has this understanding of the extent and limits of their own knowledge, they will be less likely to act erroneously. The middle and later political works are much less interested in instilling genuine self-knowledge in individual citizens. Instead, Plato shifts to a more direct approach to produce the results of Socrates' dream society by carefully shaping the formal and informal moral education of the citizens through the use of foundational myths like the noble lie of the *Republic* or through the early childhood moral education program of the *Laws*. I argue for this interpretation in Chapter 3.

In order to understand how this shift takes place, the second and third chapters examine Plato's views of persuasion and rhetoric and how they are applied in his political philosophy. Chapter 2 examines Plato's attitude toward persuasion. This requires a distinction between persuasion and teaching, which is most explicitly established in the *Gorgias* and *Theaetetus*. In

[3] I will sometimes refer to dialogues as "earlier" and "later". These distinctions refer to the apparent development of Plato's own philosophical views and methods throughout his literary career. This commonly held view usually suggests that the development signifies a shift from "Socratic" philosophy based on question-and-answer examination, to the presentation of a more "Platonic" philosophy. Although I am skeptical of the possibility of providing a specific ordering of the dialogues based on the time of composition, I will nonetheless use these common terms to refer to the general tone or method of the text in question. In this way, I align more with Cooper (1997) than the more strictly historicist view of Vlastos (1991).

the most basic terms, for Plato, teaching requires someone with knowledge to produce knowledge in their audience. Persuasion, on the other hand, only requires someone to produce belief in their audience, something they can do whether they know the subject or not. Belief may be true or false or between truth and falsity. While Plato often criticizes mere persuasion, the *Phaedrus* explores the idea of "artful rhetoric," which Plato seems to endorse as a virtuous form of persuasion. There, Plato provides a set of requirements for virtuously producing belief in an audience without producing knowledge. Artful rhetoric requires that the speaker have knowledge of the topic, of the nature of the human soul in general, and of the souls of their audience. This is a form of persuasion which aims to produce genuine benefit for the audience, even though it does not aim to properly teach them.

Chapter 3 examines Plato's application of artful rhetoric in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. I examine the noble lie, which I argue aims to achieve a state in which (1) all citizens understand what role they are best suited for in the society, so that (2) each citizen will only do what they are best suited for and not pursue what they are not qualified to do well. I understand (1) as an extension of Socratic self-knowledge and (2) as a desired result of Socratic self-knowledge. In the second half of the chapter, I turn to the *Laws*. I argue that the persuasive preludes to the laws in the *Laws* do not rely on strictly rational arguments to persuade the citizens to accept and comply with the laws. Instead, the preludes provide reasons to accept the laws as just and comply with them. Reasons, however, are not always grounded reason alone. The Athenian Visitor in the *Laws* argues for a lifetime of moral persuasion, from infancy well into adulthood. The result of this moral training is the citizens of Magnesia being inclined to understand the law code, which reflects the very moral lessons they have received throughout their life, as well-justified and morally correct. The Athenian's plan for the people to be persuaded *en masse* of what he believes

to be morally or practically good, rather than being taught, relies on the principles of artful rhetoric of the *Phaedrus*.

In Chapter 4, I consider the possible democratic applications of Socratic self-knowledge as Plato conceives of it. I argue that the political application of Socratic self-knowledge does not necessarily lead to Plato's epistemic aristocracy, as depicted in the *Republic* and to a lesser extent in the *Laws*. Socratic self-knowledge may be beneficially applied to a democratic system as well. In a political context founded upon inclusive shared deliberation, a cultural value of epistemic self-awareness – the knowledge of what one knows and does not know – would be a great benefit to fruitful collaborative deliberation. By accepting that we ourselves do not know all there is to know about any possible political decision, and that others may have important relevant knowledge, we will become more likely to engage as collaborators rather than as adversaries and to consider other perspectives and positions more seriously.

Two key conclusions of this dissertation are that Socratic self-knowledge has a political application essential to Plato's politics, and that Plato is wrong about the necessary socio-political results of this kind of epistemic self-awareness. Socratic self-knowledge can be seen as a democratic virtue relevant to political decision making today and can have a positive practical application in our modern context. In the conclusion, I suggest some possible avenues for further research into the application of these ideas in modern democratic theory, proposing ways for democratic institutions to incorporate and develop epistemic self-awareness and a pro-democratic use of artful rhetoric.

There are some issues and concepts at the foundation of this dissertation that are important to clarify up front. First, I take "Socratic self-knowledge" to be the knowledge of what one knows and does not know. There is some inconsistency in what Socrates means by the word

"knowledge" here, but I argue that in these contexts it must refer to a loose sense of knowledge, one more in line with the sense of "awareness" than "certainty". This is partly because of the use of the Greek word *gignōskein* in the *Apology* and *Alcibiades* in the context where self-knowledge is discussed. The word *gignōskein* in Plato tends to have a looser sense than the word *epistēmē*, invoking a mental state more like awareness or familiarity than scientific knowledge, which is closer to iron-clad certainty. We see the problem with associating self-knowledge with the stricter sense of knowledge in the *Charmides*, when Socrates switches from using *gignōskein* to *epistēmē*, which leads to the seeming impossibility of self-knowledge in that text. For this reason, I sometimes use the phrase "epistemic self-awareness" to describe the psychological state of Socratic self-knowledge.

Second, I understand epistemic self-awareness to be distinct from epistemic humility. Epistemic self-awareness is a psychological state which can be achieved by becoming aware of the extent and limits of one's own knowledge. Epistemic humility is an attitude with which one can approach a deliberative or decision-making process, or any other contemplative or conversational pursuit. It is likely that someone who is epistemically humble has some awareness of the extent and limits of their own knowledge. And it is ideal that becoming epistemically self-aware will result in an attitude of epistemic humility. However, the two are not identical and it is at least conceptually possible to have one without the other. For instance, it is possible to be fully aware of one's own lack of knowledge in a particular subject but still attempt to appear knowledgeable or claim to have that knowledge. Further, it is possible, and perhaps even common, to be epistemically humble due to intellectual insecurities through which one underestimates the extent of one's own knowledge of a given topic. Plato sometimes seems to

assume that epistemic humility will naturally follow from epistemic self-awareness.[4] Likewise, my concern will primarily be epistemic self-awareness. But the practical application tends to assume that genuine humility will tend to follow from genuine epistemic self-awareness.

Part of my argument in this thesis is that Plato sees epistemic self-awareness as leading to epistemic humility, and that epistemic humility prevents wrongdoing. Wrongdoing includes not only poor decision-making at the personal and political level, but also overestimating one's own qualifications to take up responsibilities like those of holding political office. This, I believe, is the basis of Plato's anti-democratic position. By resting his political theory on the premise that not everyone is intellectually suited for political decision-making, Plato denies a fundamental premise of democratic theory – that citizens can and should have a say in their own government. Plato also uses epistemic self-awareness to justify his vision of a technocratic state, in which only the intellectually qualified and naturally suited are permitted to engage in specific activities, as it is portrayed in the *Charmides* and *Republic*.

However, as I will argue, epistemic self-awareness does not necessarily lead to Plato's epistemic technocracy, since an inclusive deliberative process does not necessarily discount the knowledge of experts in favor of popular opinion, as Plato tends to imply. There is room to value expertise in a democracy without ceding all decision-making power to the experts. Plato's politics tends to include the ability of qualified experts to – sometimes rationally, sometimes non-rationally – persuade the masses to accept and comply with the decisions of the expert political class. They accomplish this though the use of artful rhetoric, which, as noted, aims only

[4] For instance, in the *Apology*, Socrates explains that he has human wisdom and does not believe he knows what he does not know, and claims that it is because of this epistemic self-awareness that he does not fear death, since "To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know" (*Ap*. 29a5-6). Having the awareness of what he does not know, in this case, seems to imply that he is also careful not to make claims about things he does not know about and does not act as if he knows about them.

to produce opinion, and not knowledge, in the audience. Artful persuasion, however, need not replace inclusive deliberation, but instead may be used to enhance inclusive collective deliberation. Experts may be called upon to give their opinions and to explain complex issues in ways that most people will be able to understand, thus enhancing the ability of most people to deliberate. This is not necessarily "teaching," in Plato's sense of creating knowledge in the audience, but neither is it misleading or coercing them. Further, I reject Plato's position in the *Republic*, and to some extent the *Statesman*, that there are experts in "the good" in general who alone are qualified to make political decisions. There are many effects of any political decision which experts may not consider without the input of those who will be affected. Expertise in some area of interest does not guarantee an understanding of the social context which will be affected by policy decisions. The full weight of the effects that political decisions will have on accessibility, economy, race, gender, class, education, housing, health, and other contexts of potential inequity will sometimes only be understood when experts work together with the average citizens who will be affected. Similarly, average citizens will only be able to fully consider how they will be affected by new policy if they deliberate about proposals with experts. For this reason, I argue that expert opinion is highly valuable for democratic deliberation, but not as a replacement for inclusive consideration of a variety of perspectives. The expert must have epistemic self-awareness to grasp where their expertise begins and ends.

My goal in this dissertation is not to argue that this pro-democratic view of epistemic self-awareness is or can be found in Plato's work. Neither Plato nor Plato's Socrates ever argue for this view. Nor is it my goal to say that Plato would endorse this pro-democratic view, or that it can fit within Plato's political framework. Rather, my goal is to analyse and assess Plato's objections to democracy and to submit a plausible rebuttal. Rather than dismissing Plato as anti-

democratic and, therefore, throwing out any insightful babies with his authoritarian bathwater, I aim to take his criticisms of democracy seriously and to use his own insights to answer them. By showing that epistemic self-awareness and expert use of persuasion need not undermine inclusive democratic deliberation, I hope to provide a serious response to the Platonic critique of democracy and to strengthen democratic theory by incorporating some of Plato's own political insights.

Chapter 1

Socratic Self-Knowledge in Plato's Politics

Much of the scholarship on Plato's conception of political knowledge is solely or primarily focused on what the political ruler must know.[5] While much has been written on the need to cultivate moral virtue in the citizens, the political knowledge necessary for good citizenship is far less examined.[6] Especially in the context of the common Platonic formulation of citizens being ruled by reason, with reason being embodied by the ruling class, the Platonic citizenry is often understood as more or less cognitively limited, and basically subservient. The general thought seems to be that rank-and-file citizens in Plato's ideal state need no political or even politically relevant knowledge to fulfill their social role as producers. However, as I will argue, Plato's Socrates seems to have a fairly consistent basic idea for a well-functioning society across several dialogues, one on which everyone: (1) does what they know how to do, and (2) does not do what they do not know how to do. This applies both to the leaders, in the sense that only those who have achieved political expertise should take part in making political decisions, and to the citizens, who ought only to pursue the actions about which they have expert knowledge. If it is

[5] In the *Republic*, much of the discussion of knowledge is centered on what the philosopher knows. The scholarly discussion regarding the knowledge of the rest of the citizenry, on the other hand, focuses mostly on what they do not know, what is censored from them, or their apparent deficit of rationality. Key discussions on the knowledge of the political rulers and restricting knowledge from the citizenry in the *Republic* include: Annas (1981), Bobonich (2019), Cross and Woozley (1964), Jonas and Nakazawa (2021), Popper (1945), Reeve (1988). Scholarship on citizen knowledge in the *Laws* tends to focus on mere belief and the act of persuasion through the use of preludes or moral habituation through institutions like supervised drinking parties. Key discussions on citizen knowledge in the *Laws* include: Annas (2017), Frede, D. (2010), Kamtekar (2010), Pangle (1988), Russon (2013), Stalley (1983), Zuckert, M. (2013).

[6] Santas (2010) helpfully distinguishes between the just citizen and the just person in the *Republic*: "a just citizen is one who performs that social function for which s/he is best suited by nature and education […] but a just person is one in whose soul each part is doing that psychic functions for which it is best suited by nature and education" (p. 101). This sort of distinction between the virtues of a person and their role as a citizen will help inform my distinction between the self-knowledge of a ruler and the self-knowledge of a citizen, where that of a ruler is more complete or philosophical knowledge and that of a citizen is more politically practical.

true that everyone in Plato's ideal state must limit themselves to what they know in this way, it seems that every citizen must have a certain amount of Socratic self-knowledge. That is, they must know what they know and do not know. In this chapter, I will argue that by focusing on this Socratic conception of self-knowledge we can illuminate Plato's conception of good citizenship throughout his career, even his later political works.

I will begin with a brief and general explanation of what Plato believes it is necessary for political leaders to know. I do not aim to make any novel claims in this section, but only to set up a basic contrast to the sort of knowledge necessary for the good Platonic citizen. This section will focus on the *Republic* and *Statesman*. The depiction of the good ruler is by no means the same in these two texts, but both texts focus heavily on the importance of the kind of knowledge required of the rulers. Knowledge of the good itself for the philosopher kings of the *Republic* and the architectonic knowledge of the statesman in the *Statesman* will serve as a sort of limit to what the average citizen must know.

Self-knowledge is explored in a variety of ways throughout Plato's corpus. In section 2, I will lay out the conception of Socratic self-knowledge found in the early dialogues as clearly as possible. This will entail close readings of key passages in the *Apology*, *Alcibiades*, and *Charmides*.[7] In the *Apology*, Socrates obliquely refers to self-knowledge when he declares that he is only wiser than the politicians, poets, and craftsmen that he encounters because, unlike

[7] The *Alcibiades* is sometimes considered spurious and not included among Plato's works. It was considered one of the best introductory texts for new students of Plato until Schleiermacher (1836) objected to its authenticity. I agree with the position of Annas (1985) and Denyer (2001) that the evidence against the *Alcibiades'* authenticity is lacking. Leaving the burden of proof to the objectors, in what follows I will assume the dialogue is authentic. But even those who doubt its authenticity may find interest in my claims that the positions found in the text align with those in other works by Plato. This dialogue is variously titled *Alcibiades 1*, *First Alcibiades*, and sometimes *Greater Alcibiades* or *Alcibiades Major*. For my purposes here, I will refer to it simply as *Alcibiades* since I make no reference to the second.

them, he does not think he knows what he does not in fact know (*Ap*. 21d3-7). This type of self-knowledge, or self-awareness about his own ignorance, prevents Socrates from making unwarranted knowledge claims and, it seems, at least partially motivates him to follow the orders of qualified superiors (*Ap*. 28d5-29a2, 29b3-8). The knowledge of his own ignorance, then, or the awareness of his own epistemic limitations, seems to be what sets Socrates apart from his fellow citizens and what he wishes to reveal to them about themselves through the elenchus. The *Alcibiades* focuses more on the interactive nature of achieving self-knowledge. Socrates advises Alcibiades that, just as an eye can see itself in the reflection of another eye, a soul can know itself by looking into another soul (*Alc*. 133b7). Looking into another's soul may be understood in at least two ways: the very sort of examination that Socrates is subjecting Alcibiades to, and is indeed known for, or as simply honestly recognizing the knowledge and skills in others that are lacking in oneself.[8]

While the *Alcibiades* focuses on the self of self-knowledge, the *Charmides* focuses on the knowledge. Socrates employs a different eye analogy to explore self-knowledge in the *Charmides*. Here, Socrates first identifies self-knowledge with knowledge of knowledge and ignorance, then asks us to imagine an eye which sees sight, rather than seeing color. This absurdity, he claims, is what knowledge of knowledge is like: It is a kind of knowledge pertaining to knowledge, but with no other content. I will argue that Socrates conflates knowledge in the sense of awareness, which is the more relevant sense of self-knowledge in the

[8] It is possible to further interpret seeing one's own soul in the soul of another as revealing a sort of identity of all humanity as essentially the same. However, while it is true that Plato would agree that human souls are structurally the same, it seems unlikely that he would portray all of humanity as being essentially equal, given the nature of the social hierarchy in his political works.

Apology and *Alcibiades*, with knowledge in the sense of certainty, by switching the vocabulary he uses from *gignōskein* to *epistēmē*.

I will then show that this conception of Socratic self-knowledge is present in the later dialogues as well, including *Philebus* and *Laws*. Interestingly, in both of these later dialogues, self-knowledge is fairly consistently framed in terms of self-ignorance. A lack of self-awareness appears in the *Philebus* when Socrates highlights three ways for someone to lack self-knowledge: over- or under-estimating oneself regarding their own wealth, physical appearance or abilities, and virtue — especially wisdom (*Philb* 48c-49a). Again, in the *Laws*, the Athenian Visitor describes self-ignorance in terms of being doubly ignorant. Double ignorance entails not only not knowing some piece of knowledge, but also believing oneself to be an expert on the topic (*Laws* 9.863c1-d5).[9] While these later dialogues shift vocabulary from self-knowledge to self-ignorance, the concept seems to be identical.

In the final section, I will show how this conception of self-knowledge, which is fairly consistent throughout Plato's corpus, can help us understand what is expected of good citizens in Plato's political works. This will entail taking a close look at the kinds of benefits that Socratic self-knowledge is supposed to provide, on Plato's account, both for the individual who has achieved it and for the society in which they live. I aim to show that the conception of Socratic self-knowledge present in the early dialogues not only remains in the later works, but is also a key component to the Platonic conception of good citizenship.

[9] In Chapter 3, I will argue that, with this consistent conception of self-knowledge, the *Laws* describes a division of political labor based on epistemic and moral qualifications that is similar to the principle of specialization of the *Republic*, but much less strict.

1 The Knowledge of Political Leaders in Plato

In order to illuminate what we don't know about Plato's politics, we should first lay out some things that we do know, specifically, about what the ruling class should know. The most obvious places to look for Plato's understanding of a good political leader are the *Republic* and the *Statesman*. The *Laws* provides a more complicated picture, which I will come to last. Consistently, the ruling class in Plato's political works needs to have accurate and precise knowledge of the human soul and what is good for it. They must, of course, know more than just this, but the human soul is heavily emphasized as an important piece. There are still live scholarly disagreements about the differences between these dialogues, and even about what their focus and aims are. However, I do not aim here to make any novel claims about Plato's view of the political leaders in these dialogues. I only aim to outline the high bar that Plato consistently sets for the knowledge required to successfully, efficiently, and justly run a state.

The *Republic*, perhaps Plato's most well-known work, aims to describe the ideal political framework to create a fully just society. The scope of the dialogue is wide and varied, including education, media censorship, the morality of lies, the nature of truth and the good, and what happens when we die. This is all in order to finally reach a satisfying definition of justice and determine whether it is better for human beings to be just, or merely to have the reputation of being just.

The *Republic* lays out an ideal scenario in which rulers have perfect knowledge. In this scenario, philosophers are kings and queens and kings and queens philosophize (*R*. 5.473c-d). The analogy here for expert political leadership is to a single person being led by their reasoning faculty, rather than by competitive spirit or appetites. There are many analogies in the *Republic* which aim to express the nature of political expertise, but the city-soul analogy is central and is

maintained throughout the work, once it is established in book two. Just as in the soul, the reasoning part must rule over the spirited and appetitive parts, so in the city the philosophers must rule over the military and producing classes. To know how the just soul is organized, then, is to know how the just state is organized. This knowledge separates the philosopher from the non-philosopher, who confuses things that appear to be good with the good itself. The philosophers are the only ones who know what is truly good and hence they are not led astray by mere appearances of what is good.

The *Statesman* aims to define the ideal political ruler. This later dialogue concentrates more on types of knowledge and relies upon the method of collection and division, a dialectical method of inquiry used particularly in the later dialogues. This is all in order to answer the question first posed in the *Sophist*, namely, whether the sophist, the statesman, and the philosopher are all one and the same.

The *Statesman* lays out a less ideal scenario than the *Republic*, but maintains a focus on what the good leader must know: namely, the human soul. While the city-soul analogy in the *Republic* makes clear that the ideal political leader should embody reason and have certain knowledge about the form of the Good, the *Statesman* uses a different analogy for political leadership. In the *Statesman*, the ideal political leader is ultimately compared to a weaver. But rather than weaving together strands of wool, they are meant to weave together moral characteristics of their political subjects — most notably, courage and moderation (310e7-311a2). In the end, the statesman's main goal is to bring together the courageous and the moderate to produce the best of all possible social "fabrics" (*Statesman* 311b7-c6).

In both the *Republic* and the *Statesman*, the leaders are preoccupied with cultivating a well-disciplined and virtuous population and culture through an understanding of the human soul. The *Statesman* is somewhat unclear about whether this weaving together of human characteristics is the result of a *Republic*-style eugenics program to produce a generation neither hot tempered nor frigid, or if it proposes more of a civic "buddy system" aiming to balance out one another's shortcomings.[10] However, it is clear that, just as the philosopher kings of the *Republic* must know the souls of their citizens in order to sort them at a young age, the true statesman must know the souls of their population in order to weave them together properly. In any case, complex and multifaceted as these political arrangements may be, a straightforward reading reveals these works to contain a benevolent if all encompassing top-down authoritarian view of the proper role of good political leaders with great control over the lives of the citizenry.

The *Laws*, Plato's longest political work, and likely the final work he wrote before his death, takes yet another approach to politics. Here, three men from different states discuss how best to instill virtue in the citizens of a prospective city through legislation. While the *Laws* seems to take a less authoritarian view compared to the *Republic* and *Statesman*, the focus on instilling virtues, especially moderation, remains, as does a fairly strict sense of social cohesion in the citizens.

The *Laws* features a less strict political hierarchy and a much more complexly organized state. Rather than a single leader or totally cohesive unit of leaders, the *Laws* envisions a vast array of institutions, committees, courts, and councils to implement public policy. There is a shift

[10] The *Statesman* may reflect the *Republic* in terms of having a eugenics program to create the best citizens, but the *Statesman* would have different aims. Rather than balancing natural temperament with opposing partners, the *Republic* is more aimed at creating the most elite classes of citizens through matching like with like.

in focus from the standing ruler or rulers to the founder of the state, who is referred to as the lawgiver or legislator. And any decent lawgiver, the Athenian Visitor says, "will never have anything in view except the highest virtue" or "complete justice" (*Laws* 1.630c). By justice, the Athenian means a combination of good judgement, self-control, and courage (*L*. 1.632c5-d1). Rather than a strict eugenics program or weaving together personality types, the *Laws* depicts an attempt to instill virtue through persuasion and social customs.[11] It seems clear that the lawgiver must understand the human soul and have a fairly clear idea of what is good for it in order to legislate and instill virtue effectively. While the original lawgiver cannot continue to have political power in Magnesia indefinitely, there is a "Nocturnal Council," explored in book 12, made up of the most virtuous members of the city, who study virtue and maintain the laws.

Knowledge of the human soul, then, is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a good political leader in all of Plato's main political works. For instance, the *Republic* makes clear that the guardians must have knowledge of the good, which they can then apply to create harmony, order, and justice. But knowledge of the human soul is the basis of knowledge of how to persuade people, what is good for people, what motivates them, and how to distinguish between types of people and mix and match them accordingly. This is true across all three dialogues. The implication, or maybe the assumption, is that having this knowledge comes with the ability to practically apply it. But what does it mean to know the human soul, and how might such knowledge be applied? We get an explicit definition of what it means to know the human soul in the *Phaedrus*. Beginning at 271a, Socrates lays out the necessary conditions for engaging in "artful rhetoric." Since the orator aims to affect the souls of his audience, he must know the

[11] See, for instance, the preludes which accompany the laws themselves in order to persuade citizens to value and comply with them (722d4-723b6), as well as instilling social values in children from a young age through the use of play (643e2-644b4). The combination of these techniques will be discussed in chapter 3.

human soul. In order to persuade virtuously, the orator must know the soul and demonstrate its nature "with precision (*akribeia*)" (*Phaedrus* 271a6). Further, the artful orator must be able to classify the different types of soul and speech, how they're affected, and "explain the cause of each" (271b2-3) as well as "the reasons why one kind of soul is necessarily convinced by one kind of speech while another necessarily remains unconvinced" (271b5-6). While this passage is particular to rhetoric, it is fairly explicit about the kind of things necessary for comprehensive and precise knowledge of the soul.

From this brief look at the three major explicitly political dialogues, I have tried to outline the high bar that Plato consistently sets for the knowledge required to successfully, efficiently, and justly run a state. This includes, in particular, certain knowledge of the human soul, how it is affected, its different types, and how they can work together. The *Republic* includes the further requirement that the philosopher king must know the form of the good, a requirement which is not explicitly present in the others. I will argue in the following sections of this chapter that the rank-and-file citizen in Plato's ideal societies need not know the human soul in general, but that they must know their own soul, at least to some degree. That is, they must have self-knowledge in the Socratic sense. In the next section, I will show what that Socratic conception of self-knowledge is.

2 What is Socratic Self-knowledge?

In order to establish that Socratic self-knowledge provides insight into Platonic citizenship, we must first clarify what the Socratic conception of self-knowledge is. Plato rarely lays out a straightforward definition for such complex concepts, particularly in the Socratic dialogues. However, one way to gain some understanding of the nature of Socratic self-knowledge is through its opposite, self-ignorance. In the following sub-sections, I will first lay out how we

can understand what Socratic self-knowledge is in the *Apology*, then how it is achieved in the *Alcibiades*, and finally why the conception of self-knowledge in the *Charmides* is not the Socratic conception of the *Apology*. I will argue that Socratic self-knowledge is primarily a kind of awareness about the limits of one's own knowledge. As such, it allows its possessor to avoid the most blameworthy ignorance of believing they know what they do not know.

I will first lay out Socrates' description of human wisdom in the *Apology*. Human wisdom is the only wisdom Socrates claims to have and is what he thinks separates him from everyone else. This human wisdom is presented as an awareness of his own epistemic limits — not believing he knows what he does not know — and as a counterpoint to what Socrates calls the most blameworthy ignorance — believing one knows what they do not know. Next, I show that the human wisdom of the *Apology* is presented as self-knowledge in the *Alcibiades*. Here, self-knowledge is described as an awareness of what one knows and does not know, the possession of which prevents wrong action. Then, I focus on the discussion of self-knowledge in the *Charmides* to highlight the difference between the more robust and comprehensive sense of knowledge explored there and the less strict and more general sense of knowledge associated with Socratic self-knowledge in the *Apology* and *Alcibiades*. I will show that the Socratic sense of self-knowledge is the less robust type of awareness of one's own epistemic limits and that it is valuable for preventing wrong action.

2.1 Human Wisdom and the Most Blameworthy Ignorance in the *Apology*

There are two passages in the *Apology* that will be of particular interest in defining the Socratic conception of self-knowledge. In the first, Socrates describes the human wisdom he has and which separates himself from all those he has examined. In the second, Socrates states that the most blameworthy ignorance is believing one knows what one does not know. I will show that the conception of self-knowledge in the *Apology* is one of awareness of the extent and limits of

one's own knowledge — the opposite of the most blameworthy ignorance.

Before Socrates declares that he has human wisdom, he denies having at least three other types of wisdom.[12] He begins by reading from the affidavit that he is accused of "studying things in the sky and below the earth; he makes the worse into the stronger argument, and he teaches these same things to others" (*Ap*. 19b5-c1). These accusations amount to claiming that Socrates engages in natural philosophy, sophistry, and rhetoric, and that he is a professional teacher of these subjects. He denies each of these accusations outright in the *Apology*.

Socrates claims to know nothing about, and to take no part in, natural philosophy, but he still maintains that he would not "speak in contempt of such knowledge" (19c4). He even challenges the jurors to find anyone among them who has ever heard him discussing anything about the matter (19d2). There is some textual evidence that Socrates studied natural philosophy as a younger man, but by this time it seems either his interest has waned, or he simply never gained an understanding deep enough to consider himself an expert or teacher of the topic.[13]

Socrates begins his speech by denying he has any rhetorical skill. He claims that the prosecution has warned the jury to beware of his rhetorical skills and has described him as an accomplished speaker (17b3). He denies this, first by stating that he could only be considered an accomplished speaker if "they call an accomplished speaker the man who speaks the truth" (17b4-5). He secondly denies it by claiming that what he says in his defense will not be "expressed in embroidered and stylized phrases like theirs, but things spoken at random and

[12] "Wisdom" translates the word *sophia*, which, as Vlastos (1994) points out, seems to be interchangeable with *epistēmē* in the *Apology* (p. 39, n.3), a word which connotes a particularly robust sense of knowledge associated with a comprehensive understanding of the subject. More on *epistēmē* and other knowledge words below and in section 1.2.3.

[13] Both Brickhouse and Smith (1988) and Reeve (1989) point out that Socrates indicates that he is at least familiar with Anaxagoras' views in the *Apology* (26d-e), and would be likely to know the common sort of astronomy that any layperson of the time would have. This may indicate that Socrates' denial of wisdom on the subject does not mean to say he knows nothing at all about it, but that he is not an expert. In the *Phaedo* (96a-99d), Socrates admits to attempting to learn natural philosophy, but quickly became disenchanted with his own capacity for the subject.

expressed in the first words that come to mind" (17c2-4). This claim, of course, could be taken as a rhetorical trick in itself designed to bring the audience into a state of ease by demonstrating a non-threatening demeanor.[14] However, to take him at his word, Socrates begins his defense with a denial of sophistry and rhetorical skill by claiming to only speak the truth, which would seem to deny any tendency to make the worse argument the stronger, and by claiming to have no prepared speech with any rhetorical flourish.

As for teaching, while he does admit that he has spent much of his time as an older man "approaching each one of you like a father or an elder brother to persuade you to care for virtue" (31b4-5), Socrates defends himself by denying that he has ever been paid to speak to anyone about these things and submits his obvious poverty as proof. But, further, he claims that in order to teach a subject or skill, particularly "the human and social excellence" (20b3), the teacher must not only know it, but be an expert. Socrates outright denies having this expertise and claims that he would take great pride in possessing it if he did (20c3). While it seems as though the affidavit accuses Socrates of teaching either natural philosophy or rhetoric and sophistry or both, after denying any teachable knowledge of these subjects, he takes the opportunity to further deny teaching moral virtue.

Already there is an interesting contrast between what Socrates does and what the sophists he is compared to do. The sophists he mentions in the *Apology* – Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias, and Evenus – all either claim to have, or are understood as having, expert knowledge in human excellence. This is why they are able to charge a fee for teaching human and social excellence to the young men of Athens. The Greek phrase at 20b3, which is often translated as "who is an expert" is "*tis* […] *epistemōn estin*" which could be more literally translated as "one

[14] This is not unlike the modern trope of the "simple country lawyer" who may not have the fancy book learning of the big city lawyers, but who nonetheless knows a thing or two about the law.

who is knowing," or "who is wise." *Epistemōn* stems from *epistēmē*, a term which is generally used in relation to specific, scientific, or systematic knowledge, such as the knowledge which craftsmen have of their specific craft.[15] So, "expertise" is an apt translation. Socrates explicitly denies having any *epistēmē* of human or social excellence. In fact, what he claims to do with his time does not require any specific knowledge of human excellence. As mentioned above, Socrates does not claim to teach anything. Rather, he claims that he goes around "doing nothing but persuading (*peithōn*) both young and old among you not to care for (*epimeleisthai*) your body or your wealth in preference to or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul" (30a6-b2; see also, 29e3, 31b4-5, 36c4-d1).[16] Encouraging concern and care for the health of one's own soul is a different pursuit altogether from teaching what qualities are good for a soul, or what a good soul entails.[17] Knowledge *that* something has great importance, in other words, is separable from systematic knowledge *of* that important thing. So, Socrates distinguishes between what he does and what the sophists do partly by distinguishing between having (or claiming to have) systematic knowledge of something and caring about it. The specific and systematic knowledge required for expertise or *epistēmē* here is the same as the precise knowledge of the soul laid out in the *Phaedrus* passage in section 1 of this chapter above, or so I shall contend. I will revisit the distinction between scientific knowledge and other types of

[15] This distinction between the more and less important things to care about will extend to the important distinction in the *Alcibiades* between the true self and the things which belong to the self. In both texts the former is the soul and the latter as the body, material possessions, wealth, reputation, etc.
For more detailed discussion of *epistēmē* in Plato, see Ahbel-Rappe (2018), Benson (2000), Lesher (1969), Roochnik (1996).

[16] This distinction between the more and less important things to care about will extend to the important distinction in the *Alcibiades* between the true self and the things which belong to the self. In both texts the former is the soul and the latter as the body, material possessions, wealth, reputation, etc.

[17] Vasiliou (2009) helpfully distinguishes between aiming principles of ethics and determining principles. He argues that Plato's Socrates only aims to get his interlocutors to have virtue as an overarching aim in all their actions, or at least to avoid vicious actions. This aim, however, does not necessarily determine what exactly virtue is. This fits well with my understanding of Socrates' self-description in the *Apology* and provides some insight into why the "what is F-ness" question is so rarely answered through the elenchus but the question of what is to be valued most of all is so easily provided.

knowledge below in the discussion of the *Charmides* in section 2.3 of this chapter below.

While Socrates denies having scientific knowledge of the human soul, human and social excellences, or any special knowledge about natural philosophy or rhetoric, he does claim to have "human wisdom" (*anthrōpinē sophia*) (20d6). This claim comes directly out of his examinations of politicians, poets, and craftsmen. Socrates begins his examinations of men who are reputed to be wise because of an oracle from the god at Delphi. Socrates' friend, Chaerephon, went to Delphi with a question – whether there is anyone wiser than Socrates. The answer came back "No." Since Socrates already holds two relevant beliefs, that "I am not wise at all" (21b3),[18] and that "[the god] does not lie; it is not legitimate for him to do so" (21b5), he was understandably confused by the god's answer. Socrates is effectively brought to a state of *aporia* by the news of the oracle, just as he later brings his interlocutors to *aporia* in his examinations. In order to find out what the god could possibly mean by saying there is no one wiser than him and to relieve his aporetic state, Socrates decided to find someone who actually is wiser than him, someone who actually does have expert knowledge of human and social excellence, so he could report this wise person back to the Delphic god and find out the oracle's true meaning. Upon examining a politician, however, who should presumably know something about human and social excellence, Socrates realizes that not only did the politician not know anything about human excellence, but that this politician's ignorance was compounded by the

[18] There is a huge amount of scholarship on what exactly Socrates means in the *Apology* and other Socratic dialogues by his denial of wisdom, which is often referred to as Socratic ignorance. A particular problem with the claim is that Socrates seems to have no problem claiming to know things: some run-of -the-mill facts about the world, and some moral content, including his belief in the gods (*Ap*. 27d-28a) and that it is shameful to disobey a superior (*Ap*. 29b8). Gulley (1968) thinks the profession of ignorance should be taken ironically, as a ploy to put his interlocutors at ease. Irwin (1977) argues that denying possession of knowledge does not bar Socrates from claiming possession of true belief or even convictions about the world which he cannot comprehensively account for. Vlastos (1994) argues that Socrates uses two meanings of knowledge, knowledge which is fallible but passes the elenchus, and knowledge which is absolutely certain — Socrates only denies having the latter. I will mostly align with Irwin on this point, adding that Socrates is able to care about virtue without a principled account of it, and he seems to indicate a difference between certain knowledge and a more vague awareness.

fact that he believed himself to know the things he is actually ignorant of. Socrates concludes: "I am wiser (*sophōteros*) than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows (*eidenai*) anything worthwhile (*kalon kagathon*),[19] but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know (*ouk oîda*), neither do I think I know (*oude oiomai*); so I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know" (21d3-7).

This awareness of his own ignorance about human excellence is what Socrates further concludes sets him apart from most people. Socrates comes to believe that the oracle only used his name as a placeholder for the wisest kind of person, that is, anyone who "like Socrates, has come to know (*engnōken*) that with respect to wisdom they are truly worthless" (23b3-4). So, then, the wisest of men are those who understand that they are worthless regarding their own wisdom. But what is it that allows them to know this about themselves? What would make someone have worthwhile wisdom? Likely, expertise – that is, having scientific and systematic knowledge of the topic in question.

Socrates eventually finds a group of people with worthwhile wisdom, namely, the craftsmen. However, the wisdom they possess is not about human excellence. Instead, when Socrates examines the craftsmen, he finds that "they knew things I did not know (*ēpistanto a egō ouk ēpistamēn*), and to that extent they were wiser (*sophōteroi*) than I" (22d3-4). Here, we see the technical expertise of craftsmanship spoken of in terms of *epistēmē*, which is then associated with wisdom (via *sophōteroi*). However, Socrates continues, "each of them, because of his success at his craft, thought himself very wise (*sophōtatos*) in other most important pursuits,[20] and this error of theirs overshadowed the wisdom (*tēn sophian*) they had" (22d5-e2).

[19] The Greek term translated here as "worthwhile" would be more literally translated as "fine and good" or "noble and good". "Worthwhile" may indicate something with worth, value or importance, but it seems to me to connote instrumental value, which is not necessarily present in "fine and good".

[20] The "most important things" here are likely the same important things Socrates mentions later: "wisdom or truth, or the best possible state of your soul" (29e3).

Socrates, then, seems to believe that expert knowledge is possible, that certain people do have expert knowledge about particular things, and that this expert knowledge is worthwhile. Yet while the wisdom of craft expertise is clearly appreciated by Socrates, the mistake of the craftsmen is misunderstanding the limits of their expertise, so that rather than discerning what they know and do not know, they believe they know what they in fact do not know. They have drawn inaccurate borders on the map of their own knowledge.

Whereas the craftsmen do possess some wisdom about many great things that Socrates himself does not possess, Socrates admits to having only one specific kind of wisdom — human wisdom. He only comes to realize that he has this wisdom after examining the politicians, poets, and craftsmen about their proclaimed or presumed expertise. What these examinations reveal is that Socrates does not think he knows what he does not know. It seems unlikely that many people would insist that they know how to make shoes or build houses or navigate ships if they do not actually have that knowledge, but many people, Socrates contends, believe that they know what is most important for human beings.[21] Socrates does state that this human wisdom which he possesses is worth little or nothing (23b1), and that the reason he was singled out by the god is that Socrates understands that his wisdom is worthless (23b4). But this does not mean that if one believes the knowledge they possess is worthless they necessarily have human wisdom. These statements are not a definition of human wisdom, but an evaluation of it.

Reeve (1989) understands Socrates' human wisdom to be his belief that "he had no expert knowledge or wisdom" regarding virtue and that this set him apart from most because "they hubristically believe that they possess expert knowledge of virtue, whereas he knows that he does not possess it" (p.36-37).[22] This understanding limits human wisdom to the subject of

[21] This overconfidence in one's own knowledge of virtue will be revisited in the *Philebus* as the most common type of self-ignorance.
[22] As Reeve points out, Socrates in the *Apology* never denies having any extent of knowledge or even certainty in all subjects (p. 45), and is even willing to die for his belief in the importance of virtue and discussion about virtue.

virtue, rather than expert knowledge in general. That is, Socrates examines his interlocutors about human virtue and finds that they do not have the expertise they think they have. Reeve limits human wisdom to the topic of virtue because after examining the craftsmen, Socrates explains that even though the craftsmen know many things, they still mistakenly think they know about the most important things as well, just like the politicians and poets. Reeve takes this to mean that the things the politicians and poets know about, and which Socrates examined them about, must be the virtues (p. 34). But this does not seem quite right. It may be true that the politicians and poets should know something about human virtue, especially considering the way Plato believes politicians and poets should function in other works. However, this is not what Socrates claims to be examining.

When Socrates reports his examination of the poets, he does not claim to examine them about the virtues, or the most important things, but about "those poems with which they seemed to have taken most trouble and asked them what they meant" (22b2-4). It is not the virtues which they could not explain, but their own poetry, so much so that "[a]lmost all the bystanders might have explained the poems better than their authors could" (22b6-c1). It is only after this examination of the poets' own poetry that Socrates adds "because of their poetry, they thought themselves very wise men in other respects, which they were not" (22c5-6). This more closely reflects the report of the craftsmen. Socrates first examines them about their particular area of proclaimed expertise (of which the craftsmen do have knowledge, but the politicians and the poets do not), and then examines them about the virtues (of which all claim knowledge, but none actually possess it). The report of the examination of the politician does not even mention the virtues, morality, the soul, or the most important things, and yet Socrates still comes away from it with the belief that "I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know" (21d6-7). So, while virtue does seem obviously to be the

primary concern for Socrates, it is not expert knowledge of virtue alone about which he examines others, or which sets him apart from them.

Human wisdom in the *Apology* is most directly and revealingly contrasted with what Socrates calls the most blameworthy ignorance (29b2), which he illustrates by explaining his fearlessness in facing death. Socrates gives two distinct reasons why he does not fear death in the *Apology*, each of which relies on an awareness about the limitations of his own knowledge. First, he compares himself to the great heroes of the *Iliad* who would rather embrace certain death than disgrace. This indicates that Socrates is motivated by something more important to him than living a long life – living a virtuous life, a life worth living. Second, and more importantly, Socrates justifies his fearlessness in the face of death by claiming that neither he nor anyone else really knows what death is like, and in fact identifies fear of death with "thinking one knows what one does not know" (29a5-6). This is what he then refers to as "the most blameworthy ignorance to believe that one knows what one does not know" (29b2-3). Socrates claims to be a sort of skeptic about the goodness or badness of death. Since no one knows what death or the after life is like, it is equally possible that death is a great experience as it is that it is no experience at all.[23] But, since we don't know, we should not act as if we know.

There are two formulations of the same Socratic principle, then, in the *Apology*. First, human wisdom is the wisdom which separates Socrates from everyone else, when he claims that "I am likely to be wiser than he to this small extent, I do not think I know what I do not know" (21d6-7). Second, the most blameworthy ignorance is what Socrates most tries to avoid. He formulates that as "to believe one knows what one does not know" (29b2-3). These two conditions are mutually exclusive and Socrates seems to try to remove the latter and induce the

[23] A possible exception to this general rule of living through the experience of death may be Er in *Republic* 10.

former with each of his examinations. As Socrates claims in the report of the examination of the politician after finding that he was not wise, "I then tried to show him that he thought himself wise, but that he was not" (21c6-d1). Socrates seems primarily then to aim to induce in his interlocutors an awareness of what they know and do not know, so that they will not believe themselves to know what they do not in fact know.[24] Socrates only refers to the awareness of the extent of one's own knowledge and ignorance as "human wisdom" in the *Apology*. Elsewhere, he refers to the same idea as self-knowledge.[25] This achievement of human wisdom and avoidance of the most blameworthy ignorance is what I will call Socratic self-knowledge — an awareness of what one knows and does not know.

Christopher Moore (2015) helpfully outlines three theses about Socratic self-knowledge: the metaphysical, the epistemic, and the practical. The metaphysical thesis essentially equates Socratic self-knowledge with self-constitution, that is, "the making of oneself into the right sort of thing, namely a thing that happens to be susceptible or obedient to knowledge" (p. 5). The epistemic thesis simply frames the self as the object of knowledge. However, since Plato tends to portray objects of knowledge as stable and clear, in order to know oneself in this way, one must first become a more stable and clarified entity in the world. The practical thesis is that Socratic self-knowledge emerges particularly through conversation with others. By talking with

[24] Rappe (2007) argues that the goal of the Socratic examinations in the *Apology* is primarily to achieve self-knowledge in the examined. Socrates' experience of *aporia* from the oracle at Delphi, leads to his examinations of the purportedly wise and the discovery of his own self-knowledge. Rappe sees Socrates' experience with the oracle and subsequent realization of self-knowledge as an initial demonstration of the same elenctic method Socrates takes up for "transmitting his own realization to his interlocutors only by provoking a similar experience in them" (p. 7). Although this does seem right for the most part, the elenchus seems also to aim at disabusing both examiner and examined of false beliefs, which may be separate from, or a step in the process of, honing self-knowledge. Socrates in multiple dialogues, including the *Apology*, stresses that he aims to examine himself and others (e.g. *Ap*. 29a1, *Euthyd*. 295a6 *Gorg*. 458a4-6, *Protag*. 333c7-9).

[25] It is sometimes argued that the awareness of one's own ignorance should not be understood as self-knowledge, but rather as Socratic ignorance. For instance, Mackenzie (1988) argues that the aporetic state achieved by Socratic examination should be understood as Socratic ignorance. I argue here that there is a further realization, separate from the aporetic state itself, of the extent of one's own knowledge and ignorance, which I refer to as Socratic self-knowledge. The state of *aporia*, on my reading, should only be understood as confusion, not as a realization.

others philosophically, we gain an understanding not only of our conversational partners, but of ourselves as well.

I understand these three formulations to be concurrent aspects of self-knowledge, and not three competing ideas. Each of these formulations also has political applications, but the main formulation for my project will be self-constitution — making the self into the sort of thing that is obedient to knowledge. This formulation of the awareness of what one knows and does not know will be important for the political implications of Socratic self-knowledge in section 1.4.

In the following section, I will turn from what Socratic self-knowledge is to consider the process of achieving it, what the self is, and the practical good self-knowledge can do for those who have it. For that, I will turn to the *Alcibiades*.

2.2 Gaining Knowledge of Oneself in the *Alcibiades*

While the *Apology* explains Socrates' motivations for pursuing self-knowledge for himself and others and provides some description of what Socratic self-knowledge is, the *Alcibiades* digs deeper into the process of gaining self-knowledge and the benefits it provides. The *Alcibiades* distinguishes between two senses of self-knowledge. The first sense is knowledge of what kind of things we are, namely a soul. The second sense is knowledge of what we know and don't know. The revelation that we are our souls is a Socratic notion shared in other dialogues, but this understanding of the self alone is not Socratic self-knowledge. Rather, Socratic self-knowledge is knowing what we know and don't know. The knowledge of what we know and don't know, Socrates argues, is only gained by engaging with others through the use of our reason. The *Apology* only hints at a possible social benefit of instilling Socratic self-knowledge in the citizens, but the *Alcibiades* highlights the importance of self-knowledge for political leaders. I will begin this section by establishing some of the important concepts and motivations of the

dialogue, including the relationship between self-knowledge and self-care. Then I will explore the self-seeing eye analogy, which illustrates Socratic examination. Finally, I will show why self-knowledge as self-control (*sōphrosunē*),[26] as it is identified in the dialogue, is necessary for a good political leader in the *Alcibiades*.[27]

The *Alcibiades* begins with Socrates approaching Alcibiades for the first time as the young Athenian has outgrown his suitors and intends to begin his political career (105a). Socrates suspects Alcibiades of having far more ambition than can be supported by his practical, let alone moral, knowledge (105c, 106a8). Alcibiades does not deny that he aspires to influence others about political matters and accepts Socrates' presumptions, at first seemingly out of simple curiosity (105e-106a).[28] Socrates says that the kind of influence Alcibiades likely wants to have over his fellow citizens is the same as the influence that Socrates himself wants to have over Alcibiades. That is, "to exert great influence (*megiston dunēsesthai*) over you by showing you that I'm worth the world to you and that nobody is capable of providing you with the influence (*tēn dunamin*) you crave, neither your guardian nor your relatives, nor anybody else except me" (105e2-5).[29] This implies that Socrates and Alcibiades have a shared ambition to be

[26] Annas (1985) argues that at the time of Plato *sōphrosunē* would have been used to refer to two concepts that modern English speakers think of as separate: self-knowledge and self-control. Covering two seemingly distinct concepts with the same word is one reason why the word is so difficult to translate. We may think of the English word "love" which aims to cover three distinct Greek concepts "*philia,*" "*eros,*" and "*agape*" as having the same problem.

[27] The *Alcibiades* ties self-knowledge to politics most directly by confronting the politically ambitious Alcibiades with an examination of his knowledge of virtue and of himself. Rider (2011) argues against the interpretation of self-knowledge in the *Alcibiades* as knowledge of an impersonal and purely rational self, and instead posits a more personalized understanding of self-knowledge which allows the individual to self-assess, including their capacity for politics. Belfiore (2012) argues that the connection between self-knowledge and self-care in the *Alcibiades* means that self-knowledge is a prerequisite to do all good things, including wielding political power. Self-knowledge is required, that is, in order to care for oneself well and to care for others well.
The *Charmides* also suggests political ramifications of self-knowledge, which I highlight in the next section, but most scholars tend to focus on the seeming impossibility and uselessness of self-knowledge as it is presented in that dialogue. See, for example: Richard McKim (1985), Richard Ketchum (1991), Hugh Benson (2003), Vasilis Politis (2008).

[28] The word translated as "influence" here is *dunamin* which is more often translated as "power" or "ability," and can be used in the context of physical force, intellectual ability, or influential authority.

[29] Alcibiades' guardian is Pericles, one of the most well respected Athenian political leaders of the time.

supremely influential about important decisions, Socrates over Alcibiades and Alcibiades over all his fellow citizens and potentially over the rest of the known world (105c1-4). While their ambitions to advise are similar, their goals as advisors are quite different. Whereas Alcibiades seems to assume he has the wisdom needed to advise the citizens, Socrates aims to show him that he does not. This is immediately revealed in the first elenctic exchange (109e-113c), in which Socrates shows Alcibiades that, although he wishes to advise the Athenians on what is better, or more just, he does not know what justice is. This is the first instance in the *Alcibiades* in which Socrates, systematically through question and answer, reveals to Alcibiades that he does not know the moral concept he believes he knows. The final section of the dialogue is focused explicitly on a particular conception of self-knowledge.

After showing Alcibiades that his guardian, Pericles, has never been able to educate anyone to make them better or wiser, Socrates suggests Alcibiades should consider pursuing self-cultivation (119a8). The word translated by Hutchinson as "cultivation" is *epimeleian*, which is usually translated as some form of care, attention, or diligence.[30] This is the same word which Socrates uses a number of times in the *Apology* when explaining what it is that he aims to accomplish through his examinations of his fellow citizens — that he spends his time "approaching each one of you like a father or an elder brother to persuade you to care for (*epimeleisthai*) virtue" (31b4-5; see also 30a6-b2, 29e3, 36c4-d1). Although Plato does not rigidly adhere to a technical philosophical vocabulary across dialogues, or often within a single dialogue, the focus on care for virtue as the most important thing in a human life seems consistently central to Socrates' moral project.

Self-cultivation, or self-care, in the Socratic sense, first requires a certain understanding

[30] Although "self-cultivation" is the phrase used when *epimeleia* is used in conjunction with the reflexive pronoun, like *sautou*, the phrase "*epimeleia te kai sophia*" is translated as "diligence and wisdom" at 123d4.

of what the self is. Rather than assuming a combination of the soul and the body as the cohesive self, with both requiring care, Socrates argues that the self is not the physical body, but that the body belongs to and is ruled by the soul, and so the self is nothing other than the soul (130c1-3).[31] The soul uses the body, just as the shoemaker uses his hands, his eyes, and his tools (129d4). There are layers of the self: the soul is the true self, then there are things which belong to the soul (the body), and finally there are things which belong to our belongings (clothes, wealth, etc.).[32] In order to properly engage in self-care, then, one must engage in care for the soul itself. If the soul is not cared for, it cannot be expected to properly care for its belongings, like the body. Caring for one's body over or before caring for one's soul is like caring for one's wealth or status above all, which are attributes that belong to us, but are not properly us. It was previously established that, in order to properly care for something and make it better, we as the caregiver must know (*gnoimen*) the nature of the object cared for (128e1-9).[33] So, in order to care for ourselves (our souls), we must first know ourselves (our souls). Further, without this essential understanding of what we properly are, we are unable to properly care not only for ourselves, but for our fellow human beings as well.[34]

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[31] Of course, this does not amount to insisting upon a lack of care for the body, that the body should be disregarded entirely. Socrates only says that care for the body is not *the same as* care for the self. Other dialogues portray Socrates emphasizing the importance of physical health, but only along with, and never instead of, psychological health.

[32] *Alc*. 128a-130d.

[33] This distinction between what we are and what belongs to us is important not only for knowing what we are but also knowing how to care for ourselves. Socrates first suggests (131b4), then states as an agreement (133c8), that self-knowledge is self-control. "Self-control," here, is translating "*sōphrosunē*," which is sometimes translated as "moderation," "temperance" or "soundness of mind". Moore (2015) suggests that this identity of self-knowledge and self-control or temperance makes self-knowledge mainly concerned with our relationship to our belongings "These are the things one is committed to nurturing or maintaining: certain objects, ideas, practices, employments, goals. [...] In noting that self-knowledge allows one to know what belongs to other people, and thus who they are, and what they judge to be good and bad, Socrates implies that self-knowledge amounts to this sort of judgment of value and commitment" (p. 129-130). This seems, however, to contradict the importance Socrates attaches to distinguishing the self (identified with the soul) and the things which belong to the self, including the body. Understanding what belongs to us and others seems to be a result of knowing ourselves, and not the way to know ourselves.

[34] I will return to this point in the final section discussing Socrates' sense of the political craft.

Here we see a distinction between two types of self-knowledge. Socrates has just argued that in order to care for ourselves, we must know what kind of thing we are. If the dialogue ended on this point, there would be a major conflict between this sense of self-knowledge and the self-knowledge in the *Apology* — an awareness of what one knows and does not know. However, this "what we are" self-knowledge is only a prerequisite for the familiar Socratic conception of self-knowledge, "what we know and do not know".[35]

After establishing that we know that we are souls, Socrates transitions to how a soul can know itself. Rather than emphasizing introspection or some other form of self-centered assessment, Socrates recommends learning about our own souls by engaging with others through reason. Socrates compares the difficulty of gaining self-knowledge to the difficulty of an eye seeing itself (132d2). It seems impossible for an eye to see itself on its own, as it is never in its own field of vision. Socrates does not deny this. Instead, he says the eye should look at something "in which it could see itself" (132d7). The best reflective surface, however, is not a mirror made with the purpose of reflecting as we may be inclined to think, but the darkest part of another person's eye. The pupil is the best part of the eye, Socrates says, because it is the part with which the eye sees (133a5-6). So, in order to see itself, it would be best for the eye to "look at an eye, and at that region of it in which the good activity of an eye (i.e., seeing) actually occurs" (133b2-3). In order to see itself well, the eye must use its pupil to look in the reflection of the pupil of another eye.

This, on the face of it, is an absurd claim, since it relies on the idea that the human eye is a better mirror than a mirror. It is also not exactly clear what the practical outcome of this

[35] I partially follow Ferguson's (2019) distinction between two types of self-knowledge: (1) 'knowledge of what one is' and (2) 'knowledge of a state or set of states one stands in' (p. 370). (1) is understood by the argument that one is nothing other than their soul, (2) is understood by discovering one's own character or desires. Ferguson argues that neither of these are specific to knowledge of one's own epistemic state, which he takes to be the type of self-knowledge Socrates aims for. I agree that this is Socrates' goal, but fail to see why our own epistemic state is not "a state or set of states we stand in."

exercise would be, since, in order to see itself in the reflection of another eye, an eye would have to be so close as to see nothing much at all in the reflection. However, it may be less absurd and instead just a bad analogy, since the whole point is to express the best way for a soul to know itself.[36] Just as the eye will see itself most clearly in the part of another eye in which sight occurs, in order for the soul to most clearly know itself "it must look (*blepteon*) at a soul, and especially at that region in which what makes a soul good, wisdom, occurs" (133b6-8). But, what does it mean for a soul to "look at a soul" at all, let alone in the region containing wisdom?

Socrates states that, if it is true that the soul is the self, when two people talk to each other, it is nothing less than two souls using words to communicate with one another (130d9-e4). If communicating with any other person is all it takes to gain self-knowledge, there would be little shortage of self-knowledge in the world. However, Socrates seems to believe that self-knowledge is severely lacking, particularly in democratic Athens, a city in which interpersonal communication in the assembly, the courts, and the council is a cornerstone. The distinguishing feature separating mere communication and communication fostering self-knowledge is the emphasis on "that region in which what makes a soul good, wisdom, occurs". It is not enough to communicate with another soul about anything in general, but about wisdom and using wisdom. In the same way that the eye uses its own pupil to see itself in the pupil of another, self-knowledge seems to be gained through using our own wisdom to engage with the wisdom of another. This same mode of communication is reflected in the *Apology* when Socrates says that "it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others, for the unexamined life is not worth living for a human being" (*Ap*. 38a3-6). If we understand the process of gaining self-knowledge

[36] Socrates himself admits that there are not many good analogous examples of what self-knowledge is like and only suggests sight as the one exception. So, it is clearly a difficult topic for analogy.

as the wisdom of one soul engaging with the wisdom of another, Socrates' moral mission in the *Apology* becomes clearer.

Albert Joosse (2014) distinguishes between the dialectical and theological interpretations of the eye passage as follows: "On the dialectical interpretation, it is through focusing on the wisdom in another soul that self-knowledge becomes possible. On the theological interpretation, turning towards another soul is only a preliminary step that shows that the soul should direct itself to something else, God, in order to know itself" (p. 5). I ultimately agree with Joosse that self-knowledge is cultivated out of the dialectical relationship between conversation partners, and not the contemplation of God. The dialectical interpretation, I believe, better explains why Socrates' metaphor requires a human partner to "look into" and learn from one another's wisdom, rather than simply "looking" inward to discover the divine in oneself.

So, if the path to Socratic self-knowledge is paved with conversation utilizing wisdom and about wisdom, Socrates, who claims to engage in conversations about virtue daily, would seem to be an exemplary case of someone well on the path to self-knowledge. However, since conversations are not one-directional, Socrates' interlocutors, if they are genuinely engaging their wisdom, would have to be affected by these conversations as well. As the pupil analogy implies, when two eyes look directly into each other, it is never only one of them which sees the other. Both pupils must be looking directly into each other. So, too, it would be impossible for only one member of a conversation about wisdom to be affected and not the other. Indeed, the examiner is sometimes regarded as the beneficiary of these examinations as much as the examined in the Socratic dialogues.[37]

[37] So, for example, in the *Apology* Socrates says that his way of life includes most of all "to examine myself and others" (*Ap*. 29a) and that "it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day and those other things about which you hear me conversing and testing myself and others" (*Ap*. 38a). In the *Phaedo*, Socrates reminds himself to "take care that in my eagerness I do not deceive myself and you" (*Phaedo* 91c). These passages show that Socrates at least sometimes considers himself to be an active participant in the examination, and not only the examiner at a safe distance from the critique of the *elenchus*.

The process of Socratic examination is distinct from engaging wisdom with wisdom through teaching. Rather than giving new wisdom to his interlocutors or further developing the wisdom already possessed by his interlocutors, Socrates tests the wisdom they assume themselves to have. Alcibiades assumes that he knows what justice is before engaging with Socrates, but cannot provide a clear definition, say when he learned it, or recall a time before he knew it. Socrates suggests that he may be the first person to really engage with Alcibiades' wisdom, because he alone cares for Alcibiades' soul, unlike his previous lovers who pursued him for his body alone (131c-132a).[38] Because Socrates cares for Alcibiades' soul, he engages with his soul in conversation — particularly with his wisdom — through examining what Alcibiades believes he knows about virtue and human nature. In this examination, engaging wisdom with wisdom, Socrates assists Alcibiades in knowing himself (his soul), and, likely, though it goes unstated explicitly in this dialogue, also develops his own self-knowledge. As he says in the *Apology*, Socrates walks away from each examination of the politicians, poets, and craftsmen with the knowledge that "I am wiser than this man; it is likely that neither of us knows anything worthwhile, but he thinks he knows something when he does not, whereas when I do not know, neither do I think I know" (*Ap*. 21d). It is less clear, however, that his interlocutors came away from these examinations with more self-knowledge than when they began.[39]

The most important thing for human beings, particularly people who intend to rule, is virtue. Socrates is initially concerned that Alcibiades has such high political ambitions without the practical and moral knowledge required for just and effective political rule, but more

[38] This is connected to the idea of the soul being the true self, while the body merely belongs to the soul.
[39] Plato suggests that the point of Socratic examination is to leave the examined in a better starting place for further examination (eg. *Laches* 200e-201c, *Theaetetus* 210b-c), and suggests the same is true for engaging in dialectical conversation (*Statesman* 285d). Plato also seems to acknowledge this as a problem for more aggressive interlocutors when he has Callicles suggest that Socrates should just engage himself with his questions (*Gorg*. 505d), leaving Socrates as both examiner and examined.

importantly because Alcibiades does not even realize that he does not have that knowledge. By gaining self-knowledge, we are able to understand our own understanding of virtue. Without self-knowledge, we are likely to be mistaken about our own moral standing. Socrates twice identifies self-knowledge with *sōphrosunē*, which Hutchinson translates as self-control. Socrates' worry for Alcibiades in a position of power without self-knowledge is more explicitly explored in Socrates' exchange with Callicles in the *Gorgias*. There, Socrates states first that each individual rules over themselves (*Gorg*. 491d8).[40] When asked what he means by self-rule, he replies that he means nothing special, "being self-controlled (*sōphrona*) and master of oneself" (491d10-e1).[41] By this, Socrates means having control of one's own desires (491e2). The states of the soul, he later explains, which make men lawful and orderly, are justice and self-control (*dikaiosunē te kai sōphrosunē*) (504d3). The *sophron* man will do what is fitting in all cases for gods and human beings (507a8), and "heaven and earth, and gods and men are held together by partnership and friendship, orderliness, self-control (*sōphrosunē*), and justice" (508a1-2).

While the *Gorgias* does not explicitly state the elenchus will bring about self-knowledge, it does associate philosophy with self-control and philosophical inquiry with the discovery of truth. This is just the sort of inquiry that Alcibiades endures with self-knowledge, identified with *sōphrosunē*, as the goal. Without importing the understanding of *sōphrosunē* as the ability to rule over oneself and do what is appropriate from the *Gorgias*, the emphasis on self-knowledge and *sōphrosunē* – particularly for political leaders – in the *Alcibiades* is left somewhat vague. We do get hints at this idea when Socrates explains that the body is ruled by the soul, and that the soul is the true self. It may be implied, then, that just as the soul must know itself and what is good for it in order to rule over the body effectively, the good political rulers must know

[40] ἕνα ἕκαστον λέγω αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ ἄρχοντα
[41] σώφρονα ὄντα καὶ ἐγκρατῆ αὐτὸν ἑαυτοῦ

themselves and what is good for themselves in order to rule over the political body effectively. Similarly, if we take Socrates to symbolize in the *Alcibiades* the kind of care he exalts in the *Apology*, and keep in mind that he wants to have the kind of influence over Alcibiades as Alcibiades desires over the citizens, we can further understand how self-knowledge is necessary for good political leadership. Knowledge of oneself allows for proper care of oneself, and proper care of oneself is necessary for proper care of others.

The *Alcibiades* is a prime example of Socrates' method and goals for examining his fellow citizens. Self-knowledge is gained through engaging our wisdom with the wisdom of others in philosophical conversation. This takes the form of Socrates examining what Alcibiades assumes he knows, with the result that the young and ambitious man is forced to confess the limits of his own knowledge. Socrates identifies self-knowledge with *sōphrosunē* in the *Alcibiades* (131b4, 133c8), without any real argument. The next section focuses on Socrates' examination of Critias about *sōphrosunē* and self-knowledge in the *Charmides* and the self-reflexive problems that come with it.

2.3 Self-Knowledge as Knowledge of Knowledge in the *Charmides*

Where the *Alcibiades* focuses on the self in its inquiry into self-knowledge, the *Charmides* focuses on the knowledge. In the *Charmides*, self-knowledge is analyzed abstractly as knowledge of knowledge and ignorance. Socrates again incorporates an analogy involving an eye to express this conception of self-knowledge. However, reflecting the shift from the self to the knowledge, this analogy focuses on the power of sight, rather than the eye. Self-knowledge is not compared to an eye looking into its own reflection, but a kind of sight that sees sight instead of color. The *Charmides*, unlike the *Apology* and *Alcibiades*, does not assume that self-knowledge is possible or beneficial to its possessor. Socrates in fact argues that it is neither. I

will argue that this is ultimately because the *Charmides* works with a different understanding of the nature of self-knowledge than the previous two dialogues. I will begin this section by laying out self-knowledge as it is understood in the *Charmides*, and by drawing a distinction between types of knowledge in Plato. Then I will examine the problems Socrates and his interlocutors encounter with respect to the self-reflexivity problem, using another eye analogy, and the problem of the practical benefit of self-knowledge in itself. I will argue that both of these problems are due to the more scientific and comprehensive sense of knowledge in the *Charmides*, indicated by the use of *epistēmē* rather than *gignōskein*.

The guiding question of the *Charmides* is how to define 'moderation' (*sōphrosunē*).[42] The final attempt at definition provided by Critias is self-knowledge – to be "moderate" is "to know oneself" (164d). This idea is later formulated as the more abstract "knowledge of knowledge and the absence of knowledge" (166e, 169b7). *Sōphrosunē* differs in this way from all other sciences (*epistēmai*), since "all the others are sciences of something else, not of themselves, whereas this is the only science which is both of other sciences *and* of itself" (166c2-4). *Sōphrosunē*, like all other virtues, is generally understood to be more of a state of mind than a piece or set of knowledge, as a science might be thought to be.[43] That is, *sōphrosunē* would normally be seen as a way of thinking about the world or an orientation within the world, especially regarding the correct action to take in it. However, if *sōphrosunē* is knowledge of knowledge and ignorance, it would seem to be a branch of descriptive knowledge about the world, rather than prescriptive. *Sōphrosunē* could then serve as an evaluative tool for what qualifies as knowledge. Socrates adds:

[42] The word *sōphrosunē* is notoriously difficult to translate. It sometimes appears as 'moderation,' 'temperance,' 'soundness of mind,' 'sobriety,' 'prudence,' or 'self-control'. In the interest of consistency, I will translate *sōphrosunē* as 'moderation' and the adjective *sophron* as 'moderate' or leave them untranslated.
[43] Here, I mean 'a science' (a branch of knowledge) and not 'science' (the activity of studying the observable world).

> "only the moderate one (*sōphron*) will know himself (*heauton gnōsetai*) and will be able to examine what he knows and does not know (*eidōs kai ti mē*), and in the same way he will be able to inspect other people to see when a man does in fact know what he knows and thinks he knows (*ti tis oiden kai oietai*), and when again he does not know what he thinks he knows, and no one else will be able to do this. And being moderate and moderation (*to sōphronein te kai sōphrosunē*) and knowing oneself (*to heauton auton gignōskein*) amount to this, knowing (*to eidenai*) what one knows and does not know (*ha te oiden kai ha mē oiden*)" (167a1-3).

With this potential definition, Socrates sets up the framework with which he and his interlocutors will be working to answer two main questions about self-knowledge.[44] If *sōphrosunē* is self-knowledge, and self-knowledge is knowledge of knowledge and ignorance, is it possible to achieve self-knowledge, and, if it is, would it even be beneficial to its possessor?

Before examining these two questions, a few important distinctions in vocabulary. Drew Hyland (2018) points out that Socratic self-knowledge in most dialogues is associated with the term *gignōskein*. However, Socrates makes a sudden and important switch in vocabulary in the *Charmides* to *epistēmē* in place of *gignōskein*. While both of these Greek terms can be translated as "knowledge," they have different connotations. At 167c1-3, Socrates resets the definition of *sōphrosunē* by saying it is the "one science (*epistēmē*) which is not of anything except itself and the other sciences (*tōn allōn epistēmōn*)" and that "this same science is also a science of the absence of science (*anepistēmosunēs*)." The previous iteration of the definition on the same page refers to self-knowledge with the word *gnōsetai*, reflecting the Delphic inscription *gnōthi sauton*, and the knowledge words associated with it in this passage are variations of *oida*, whose meaning can range from "acknowledge" to "assure" to "practical knowhow". But here Socrates

[44] Socrates here also connects his examinations with avoiding the most blameworthy ignorance as it is portrayed in the *Apology*. Socrates claims that he engages in critical dialogue because he fears "that at some point I'll get away with thinking that I know something when I don't know it" (166c-e). This sentiment is also reflected in the *Gorgias* when Socrates claims that he is the kind of person "who would be pleased to be refuted if I say anything untrue, and who would be pleased to refute anyone who says anything untrue; one who, however, wouldn't be any less pleased to be refuted than to refute" (458a). This furthers the idea that the point of Socrates' examinations is to benefit himself as well as his interlocutors.

makes a turn to *epistēmē,* which can be a general knowledge word, but is most closely linked, as the translation suggests, with scientific knowledge and the comprehensive knowledge which craftsmen have of their specific craft. Socrates keeps this *epistēmē* vocabulary for the remainder of the dialogue.

The differences between *gnōsis* and *epistēmē* in Plato's works concern not only the kind or subject matter of the knowledge, but also the justification for it. At *Meno* 98a, Socrates insists that an explanatory or causal account (*aitias logismōi*) is necessary to make true belief into knowledge (*epistēmai*). Again, at *Phaedo* 76b, Socrates and Simmias agree that when someone knows something, they must be able to give an account (*logon*) of what they know (*epistatai*). The *Phaedrus* passage regarding artful rhetoric (273a-b) goes into more detail about what is necessary for comprehensive, scientific knowledge of a craft. Namely, one must know the nature of the subject and objects of the craft and how they interact, the classification of different types of the craft's subjects and objects, and their causes.[45]

Socrates explains the sort of technical knowledge he is associating with *epistēmē* and scientific self-knowledge in the "Socrates' Dream" passage at *Charmides* 173a-d. Socrates' dream society places the highest value on moderation as Critias has defined it: having scientific knowledge of what one knows and does not know. In this society, no one would claim to have knowledge that they do not have, nor could anyone get away with such a claim. They would not claim to have knowledge that they do not have because they value self-knowledge in this scientific sense, and they wouldn't be able to get away with it if they did, because all members of the society would not only know what they know and don't know, but also have knowledge of

[45] Lesher (1969) and Lyons (1963) argue that *gnōsis* in Plato is most closely connected to knowing or being acquainted with people, and to children at the early stages of learning to read and write, recognizing individual letters. These observations reflect our modern English understanding of knowledge as recognition, as in "I'll know it when I see it," or "I know of her, but I don't know her".

knowledge and ignorance. Of course, this would also entail knowledge of another craft for them to engage in skillfully, as well as knowledge of good and bad in order to live happily (174b9-c3). As stated above, knowledge of knowledge and ignorance would allow its possessor to recognize not only true knowledge but false claims to knowledge as well. Without anyone claiming abilities that they do not have, all members of the society would be healthier, there would be no false prophets, and all products would be better made because they were produced by true craftsmen.[46]

This scientific, comprehensive knowledge with an account is just the sort of knowledge that is associated with self-knowledge in the *Charmides*, which leads there to the refutation of self-knowledge being either possible or useful. A scientific knowledge of knowledge and the absence of knowledge would amount to, as Hyland puts it, "two very long lists, one, 'what I know,' another, presumably much longer, 'what I do not know'" (p. 58). This seems clearly impossible, or at least implausible and impractical. It is also difficult to see how it would be beneficial. But more importantly, it seems not to be what Socrates generally means by self-knowledge across dialogues.

The first major problem with this account of self-knowledge in the *Charmides* is with the possibility of knowledge of knowledge and ignorance. Socrates employs another eye analogy to help his interlocutors examine the issue, which is even more confusing than the eye analogy in the *Alcibiades*. Rather than the ability of the eye to see itself, Socrates focuses on the function of an eye, that is, sight. After establishing knowledge of knowledge as a science of science, Socrates comments on how odd it is, before suggesting an odd analogy that will prove its impossibility. Socrates suggests they should think of a kind of vision that sees vision instead of

[46] This political result of scientific self-knowledge sounds very close to the society focused on justice in the *Republic*, as we will see in 2.4.

color — "vision of itself and the other visions and also of the lack of visions" (167c10-d1). They agree this seems impossible, and that the same is true of the other senses, as well as love, fear, wishes and desires. So, it seems likely that a science of science is impossible. Again, they inquire whether anything can have the quality of being a certain way in relation to itself and not anything else. The greater, for instance, must be greater than something else (168b5). Not only does the greater need something to be greater than, but it absolutely cannot be greater than something and itself — that would make it greater and less than itself at the same time (168b9-c3). The same is true of the double, the older, and the senses. It seems likely then that a science of science is impossible.

But, even if it were possible, what good would it serve to have knowledge of knowledge without any first order knowledge? Probably, they agree, it would do no good (or bad) at all. Critias suggests that, just as a man who has speed is fast, and one who has beauty is beautiful, "when a person has a knowledge which knows itself, then I imagine he will be a person who knows himself" (ὅταν δὲ δὴ γνῶσιν αὐτὴν αὑτῆς τις ἔχῃ, γιγνώσκων που αὐτὸς ἑαυτὸν τότε ἔσται.) (169e5-7). Socrates agrees but is confused about how knowing what one knows and does not know is the same as knowing oneself. After all, a person who possesses knowledge of knowledge would have knowledge of knowledge itself, not knowledge of the knower herself. In the same way that knowledge of knowledge does not allow the knower to know their own health without also having the requisite medical knowledge, knowledge of knowledge would not alone allow its possessor to know themselves without the requisite knowledge of the self (that is, knowledge of the self as the soul, as explained in *Alcibiades* above). They would be a person with knowledge of knowledge, not a person with knowledge of the knower of knowledge of

knowledge. In the same way, an eye with the power to see sight would not see itself, at least not without some further assistance.

Nonetheless, the two agree that a science of science would allow its possessor to distinguish between what is a science and what is not (170a6-7). However, it is not through *sōphrosunē*, or the science of science, that one is able to distinguish between sickness and health or justice and injustice or any other set of knowledge, but rather through knowledge of medicine and politics and the other particular sorts of knowledge (170b1-c3). So, *sōphrosunē*, on this account, amounts to knowing *that* one knows and does not know, and not knowing *what* one knows and does not know (170d2-3). This means that a science of science alone, with no other relevant knowledge as a metric, would not be useful for judging whether someone has true or false knowledge about anything in particular. In the same way, the expert epistemologist, with no other information, could not determine whether his mechanic knew what they were doing to their car — based solely on their testimony, anyway.

It may seem, after all, that knowledge of knowledge and ignorance, and therefore *sōphrosunē*, and therefore self-knowledge, is an impractical goal by the arguments in the *Charmides*. However, bringing about self-knowledge through disabusing his interlocutors of their mistaken beliefs is the main focus of Socrates' mission in the *Apology* (23b5-c1, 29e3-30b4).[47] Socrates' defense speech provides us with his claim of wisdom through awareness of his own ignorance "I do not think I know what I do not know" (21d). Not believing one knows what one does not in fact know seems very much like knowledge of one's own knowledge and ignorance – or at least knowledge of one's ignorance.

[47] See 2.1 above.

Hugh Benson (2003) points out just this apparent tension between the *Apology* and the *Charmides.* He says of the two arguments in the *Charmides* that "the first entails that what Socrates describes himself as doing in the *Apology* cannot be done; the second entails that even if it could, it would not be worth doing" (p. 32). Benson's resolution to this tension reflects my own emphasis on the distinct sense of knowledge Socrates inserts into the *Charmides*.

Benson helpfully breaks the *Charmides* position on self-knowledge into four distinct abilities, namely, that the self-knower can know: (a) that they themselves have knowledge of a specific subject matter, (b) that they do not have knowledge of a specific subject matter, (c) that someone else has knowledge of a specific subject matter, and (d) that someone else does not have knowledge of a specific subject matter (p. 36). Since self-knowledge, as Socrates and Critias have agreed to define it, entails all of these, Socrates does not need to disprove them all for the whole definition to be false. Benson argues that Socrates does not disprove the possibility or usefulness of (b) and (d), but rather aims his critique only at the positive claims (a) and (c). Of course, knowledge of (b) and (d) may imply knowledge of (a) and (c), but only to an extent.[48] Benson argues that, while this may be true, and while there is evidence supporting a robust sense of knowledge in the Socratic dialogues which entails that "the knowledge of opposites is one and the same" (p. 37), the Socratic mission described in the *Apology* does not rely on this robust or comprehensive sense of knowledge. Instead, he argues that the *Apology* only requires a less robust sense of knowledge, on which it is more like recognition of one's own ignorance than the scientific, comprehensive knowledge the *Charmides* relies on for these arguments.

The Socratic self-knowledge of the *Apology* and *Alcibiades* may reflect a less robust type of second-order awareness of one's own epistemic limits, rather than the true science of science

[48] This is Kahn's argument in *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue* (1996).

described in the *Charmides*.[49] However, Socrates in the *Apology* refers to his own human wisdom, his awareness of his own ignorance about moral concepts, as "worth little or nothing" (*Ap*. 23b1). So, it may seem that even in the *Apology* Socrates admits the uselessness of this type of self-knowledge. However, this uselessness also seems to conflict with Socrates' intent to examine and reveal the ignorance of his fellow citizens to themselves. Why would he be so driven to do this, if it were completely useless? There may in fact be two senses of value at work in the *Apology*, just as there are two senses of knowledge in the *Charmides*. Socrates seems to believe that knowledge of one's own ignorance is not worth much because it is not a positive piece of wisdom. It does not enable him to do anything the way positive knowledge of, say, house building would. Further, the comparison in the *Apology* is between the knowledge of his own ignorance and the expert wisdom of someone with true knowledge of moral concepts or the supreme wisdom of the gods (20d4-e3).[50] But Socrates' knowledge of his own ignorance is also clearly very highly valuable insofar as it allows him to avoid the most blameworthy ignorance, which Socrates seems to believe is the reason people make bad choices.[51] If awareness of our own ignorance allows us to avoid bad choices, even if it is not a positive piece of knowledge, practical or abstract, it would seem to be very valuable knowledge.

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[49] Melissa Lane (2020) describes this Socratic self-knowledge of the *Apology* as "a second-order achievement of recognizing the actual extent of one's knowledge" (p. 52). Hyland (2018) sees this distinction as reason enough to say that science of science is refuted in the *Charmides*, but not the Socratic conception of self-knowledge of the *Apology* (p. 56).

[50] "What has caused my reputation is none other than a certain kind of wisdom. What kind of wisdom? Human wisdom, perhaps. It may be that I really possess this, while those whom I mentioned just now are wise with a wisdom more than human; else I cannot explain it, for I certainly do not possess it, and whoever says I do is lying and speaks to slander me" (Ap. 20d4-e3)

[51] As Socrates argues in the *Alcibiades*, "the sort of people who don't think they know how to do things make no mistakes in life" but "those who don't know but think they do know [...] This is the ignorance that causes bad things" (*Alc*. 117e4-118a8). This sense of self-knowledge as enough awareness about one's own knowledge and ignorance to prevent mistakes by overstepping one's bounds, fits well with Socrates' dream society in the *Charmides* as well as the principle of specialization in the *Republic*, which we will see in section 1.4.

Socrates tends to maintain across dialogues the idea that an awareness of our own ignorance will prevent us from making bad choices and performing wrong actions. In the *Gorgias*, for instance, which focuses heavily on the difference between rhetoric and philosophy and on whether or not the speaker really knows what they are talking about, Socrates highlights the importance of not busying ourselves in the affairs of others (526c).[52] But, this idea of not meddling in others' affairs is usually associated with the principle of specialization in the *Republic*. In both the *Gorgias* and *Republic*, our own affairs would seem to be those subjects which we really know about, whereas the affairs of others are those subjects which we do not know about. Knowing the difference between what we know and do not know is Socratic self-knowledge. In the following section, I will argue that this conception of Socratic self-knowledge is maintained in the middle and later dialogues, particularly *Republic*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*, with special focus on its political application and on its benefits in Plato's political works.

3 Self-knowledge and Self-ignorance in *Republic*, *Philebus,* and *Laws*

The dialogues so far examined all fit squarely in the traditional group of "early" or "Socratic" dialogues.[53] It is sometimes thought that not only Plato's methodology changes in the middle and later dialogues, from a Socratic examination without much positive input to a more

[52] Ober (1998) argues that, in the *Apology*, Socrates is guilty of just the sort of meddling in others' affairs that he preaches against by carrying out his examinations of what they know and don't know. However, examining what others know and don't know seems to be exactly what Socrates knows how to do.

[53] There is some debate about whether there is any reliable way to divide Plato's dialogues chronologically. The developmental view is the more popular view, which maintains that the dialogues can, at least roughly, be organized chronologically into basic sets of early, middle and late — sometimes including transitional dialogues and other subsets. The "early" dialogues are sometimes referred to as "Socratic" because of their focus on Socrates as the central character and his practice of examination, typically regarding moral topics, which is reflected in his self-description of the *Apology*. It is thought that this more closely represents the historical Socrates' actual philosophical views and practices than the middle and later dialogues. See especially, Brickhouse and Smith (1989), Irwin (1977), Vlastos (1991). I will refer to these dialogues as "Socratic" to indicate their focus on examination of the interlocutors rather than communicating new philosophical positions to them, but without maintaining any particular chronology.

teacherly scenario in which either Socrates or some other acknowledged expert attempts to show his interlocutors the truth of some positive thesis, but also that the subject matter is more or less completely changed as well. Where the Socratic dialogues focus on examining the wisdom of Socrates' interlocutors, usually regarding moral concepts, the middle dialogues, like *Republic*, *Phaedo* and *Phaedrus,* signify a turn toward Socrates expressing positive ideas about epistemology, metaphysics, and politics. The later dialogues, some of which do not feature Socrates at all, like the *Timaeus*, and *Laws*, feature more cosmological views and an understanding of pleasure that seems distinct from that of the early and middle dialogues. Despite these apparent differences in content between Platonic works traditionally associated with the "early," middle" and "late" periods in Plato's career, in this section, I will argue that the Socratic conception of self-knowledge laid out in the preceding sections is actively present throughout Plato's career, including in the middle and later works. Having shown how Socratic self-knowledge features throughout Plato's corpus, I will have a firm basis in the following section to argue that Socratic self-knowledge is essential to Platonic political philosophy.

I will begin with the *Republic*. I will show how Socratic self-knowledge plays a critical role in the mechanics of Kallipolis, the imagined utopia that Socrates, Glaucon, and Adeimantus create in their discussion. The basis of the division of labor in Kallipolis, as it is presented in book 2, is the principle of specialization.[54] This principle is the cornerstone of the social order of the city because it entails that everyone should only do one thing for which they have the requisite skills, and no one should do anything that they do not know how to do. In order for each citizen to do only what they know, they must of course know what they know and do not know. The role of each citizen is assigned based on an assessment of their natural abilities and potential, but the personal understanding of the extent and limits of their natural abilities is a

[54] I take the phrase "principle of specialization" from Annas (1981).

kind of self-consciousness which is foundational to the functioning of the city.[55] This self-knowledge allows them to act justly as it is explained in book 4, to not meddle in the business of others. This sense of justice applies to both the city and the soul.

Then, I will move on to *Philebus*, where Plato lays out three types of self-ignorance — ignorance of one's own physical ability and beauty, of one's own wealth, and of one's own virtue, particularly wisdom. Through this taxonomy of self-ignorance, exhaustive or not, we can gather an understanding of self-knowledge, which seems here much broader than the awareness of one's own epistemic limits characteristic of Socratic self-knowledge I have argued for so far. However, I will show that each of these modes of self-ignorance is aligned with the layers of the self as it is explored in the *Alcibiades* — the soul as the true self, things which belong to the soul (the body), and things which belong to our belongings (clothes, wealth, etc.).[56]

Finally, I will shift focus to the *Laws*, where we see self-knowledge again explored in terms of ignorance. Here, the phrase 'double ignorance' is defined in terms of lacking awareness of one's own ignorance. There is a clear emphasis, even in Plato's final dialogue, written without Socrates as a character, on the importance of the Socratic conception of self-knowledge.

3.1 *Republic*, Self-Knowledge and Justice

Plato's *Republic* is a sprawling work which deals with ethics, metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, and, of course, politics. The central and motivating question for the wide-ranging discussion is the nature of justice. In order to identify justice, Socrates and his interlocutors attempt to create through their discussion a perfectly just city. After agreeing upon the structure, organization, and essential policies of such a city, they will be able to extract the essence of

[55] I will argue in chapter 3 that this is not a genuine sense of Socratic self-knowledge, but a coerced sense of the extent and limits of each citizen's own proper place in the society.
[56] *Alc*. 128a-130d.

justice, which they had been seeking all along. Since the nature of justice is singular and not context dependent, they agree that justice in the city will be the same as justice in the soul of the individual only at a larger scale (*Rep*. 2.368c-d). Such is the justification for the city-soul analogy. I will begin this section by briefly laying out the conception of justice as Socrates defines it in book 4. With that definition established, I will show how the principle of specialization established in book 2 is based on this definition of justice. Finally, I will show that the notion of justice and the principle of specialization in the *Republic* require Socratic self-knowledge, or something like it, in each citizen. Good citizens are required to be aware of what they know and do not know.

In *Republic* book 4, Socrates begins to identify the virtues of the city, with the assumption that, after identifying three (wisdom, courage, and moderation) the fourth (justice) will present itself as what is left over (4.428a).[57] First, wisdom is identified as knowledge (*epistēmē*) which does not pertain to any particular craft, but deals with the maintenance of the city in general as well as its relations to other cities (4.428c10-d1). Wisdom is exclusive to the political rulers of Kallipolis. Next, courage is identified as "the belief that has been inculcated by the law through education about what things and sorts of things are to be feared" (4.429c6-7).[58] Moderation (*sōphrosunē*) is then defined as a kind of order and harmony. Particularly, it is the harmony between ruler and ruled when both understand their own proper role. This is compared to self-control (*kreittō hautou*) in which the better part of the soul has power over the worse part, which tends to pursue immediate, physical, and short-term pleasures.

Finally, with the other three virtues defined, Socrates can see what justice is, which to his

[57] This assumption seems unsupported. "What is left over" after the other definitions have been identified cannot be clear unless there is already a set of possible definitions to be identified, which they do not establish and never mention as a possibility.

[58] This sense of courage, called 'civic courage,' is particular to the auxiliary class and the product of education. The more natural sense of courage which is observable in animals and slaves is not explored here.

surprise "is exactly what we said must be established throughout the city when we were founding it" (4.433a2). By this, he means the principle that each member of the state must do one job for which they are best naturally suited. It turns out, then, that "justice is doing one's own work and not meddling with what isn't one's own" (4.433a7-b1). This sense of justice is what allows the other virtues to grow in both the city and soul. After agreeing that justice is not meddling in what is not one's own work, they further agree that injustice is the worst thing that can be done to a city (and, therefore, to a soul) (4.434c3-4). Attempting to do what we do not know how to do, or are not naturally suited for, then, is the essence of injustice.[59]

There are two senses of knowledge at play here. The first is the specific knowledge of a craft or pursuit for which each citizen is naturally well-suited. The second sense is the knowledge each citizen has of their own nature. The first sense of knowledge is directly tied to the ability of each citizen to do the work for which they are well-suited. Recall Socrates' dream society in the *Charmides*. There, Socrates insists that the most well-functioning society will be organized around the knowledge of each citizen of how to do their work with knowledge and, therefore, precision. This knowledge is why everything in the society is of high quality. The second sense of knowledge is more related to the self-awareness each citizen has about their role in the society. This is the knowledge of the kind of soul or nature they have, and, therefore, what kind of work is appropriate for them and to which class they belong. The combination of these two senses of knowledge, the direct knowledge of a craft, and the meta-knowledge of the extent and limits of one's own knowledge, result, Plato seems to think, in the just state in which everyone does what they know how to do and does not do what they do not know how to do.

In Book 2, Socrates establishes some key ideas that persist throughout the *Republic*. The

[59] We may, here, recall the claim in the *Alcibiades* (117e-118a) and *Charmides* (171d6-e1) that wrongdoing stems from acting out of ignorance and self-knowledge is important for correct action. We will see this same sentiment again in the *Laws* (863c-d) in section 3.3 of this chapter.

first is that it will be easier to see what justice is like in the city than the individual (2.368c2-369a2). That is, there is no essential difference between justice in the city and justice in the individual. There is one form of justice which can appear in many places and contexts. Justice is easier to see in the city only because it is larger. Next, it is better for each person to do only one task than to attempt many (2.369e-370a). This is because concentrating on one task allows us to produce more and better quality. Julia Annas (1981) helpfully explains that Plato does not understand this principle of specialization as simply a matter of productive efficiency, but as a necessary social understanding of the interdependent and therefore cooperative relationship between each citizen to every other citizen (p. 73-74). In other words, specialization is about seeing oneself, not as a cog in a machine, but as a member of a team.

Cross and Woozley (1964) point out that the definition of justice in book 4 is not necessarily the same as the principle of specialization in book 2, even though Socrates seems to assume that there is no real difference. Both passages emphasize not meddling in what is not your own. However, Cross and Woozley point out that after establishing this conception of justice, Socrates says that it would not be a major problem if a carpenter and a cobbler swapped jobs (4.434a-c). This seems to fly in the face of the principle of specialization. Cross and Woozley argue that Plato conflates, or otherwise dismisses, the difference between sticking to your own job and sticking to your own class (p. 110). However, there are two levels to what makes one suited to their work: their nature, and their knowledge. A person's nature will determine their interests and abilities, while their knowledge will hone those interests and abilities. The philosophers in Kallipolis will not become philosophers without education, and the carpenters will not become carpenters without training in the craft.

The principle of specialization may pertain to each member of the perfect society, while justice pertains to each class. This seems to be how the city-soul analogy works. Justice is a

matter of sticking to one's nature (e.g., the spirited part not attempting to control the soul, and the military not attempting to rule the state). A class attempting to take over an aspect of the state that they ought not to take over would seem to be a greater injustice than a carpenter attempting to make shoes. This may well be what Socrates meant when he suggests that such a job swap would not cause "any great harm to the city" (4.434a6).

There is no explicit mention of self-knowledge in the *Republic*, but the Socratic conception of self-awareness regarding one's own knowledge seems to be assumed at a very basic level throughout. The principle of specialization requires each citizen of Kallipolis to have just this sort of self-awareness. Without knowing what they know and do not know, it would be difficult for them to refrain from partaking in activities for which they lack the requisite knowledge. In fact, this seems to be one of the issues Socrates consistently attempts to intervene in throughout the Socratic dialogues. The inciting incident of many Socratic dialogues is an interlocutor claiming to have expert knowledge of some topic, usually of moral or political significance, which prompts Socrates to examine them about the topic resulting in refutation of the supposed expert.[60] The implication of the Socratic elenchus is not only that the examined person does not know what they thought they knew, but that they should therefore cease and desist from claiming to possess such knowledge. In the *Alcibiades*, as we have seen, Socrates objects to Alcibiades pursuing politics on the basis that the young man does not yet have the requisite knowledge. This implication is active but reversed in the *Republic*. Rather than convincing people not to do what they are not epistemically suited for, Socrates insists, with the principle of specialization and his conception of justice, that everyone ought to do only that for which they are best suited.

[60] In the *Protagoras*, Socrates interrogates the titular character on the teachability of virtue, which Protagoras claims to teach. Likewise, the *Gorgias* begins with an examination of rhetoric, of which Gorgias is a renowned teacher.

3.2 *Philebus* and Self-Ignorance

The *Philebus* is a late Platonic dialogue primarily focused on the question of which type of life is best, especially concerning the role of pleasure in the good life. The discussion only touches on self-ignorance briefly in a fairly short passage, but the implications for the Socratic conception of self-knowledge are important (*Philebus* 48c-49c). The three types of self-ignorance laid out in *Philebus* are most directly relevant to the conception of the self made explicit in the *Alcibiades*. There, the soul is declared the true self which rules over the body and other things which belong to it. The *Philebus* presents three types of self-ignorance but does not indicate a hierarchy of importance in the way that the *Alcibiades* suggests. In this section, I will briefly explain the three types of self-ignorance presented in the *Philebus*, then discuss their implications for the Socratic conception of self-knowledge.

The discussion of self-ignorance in the *Philebus* arises in the context of a larger discussion about different types of pleasures — namely pleasures which contain some pain, like watching a great tragedy or laughing at the misfortune of others, the latter of which requires some amount of malice. Socrates then establishes that foolishness (*anoia*) is always a bad thing and the basis for the ridiculous (*Phileb*. 48c2-5).[61] Naturally, one of the more popular human characteristics to ridicule for a comedy is a lack of self-awareness. The ridiculous, he goes on to claim, is a vice which "involves the opposite of the condition mentioned in the inscription at Delphi," that is, to "know thyself" (48c8). So, the condition which makes one worthy of ridicule is the vice of not knowing oneself at all (*mēdamē gignōskein hauton*) (48d2). After establishing

[61] The ridiculous, however, is not always a laughing matter. As Socrates later points out, a weak person who lacks self-awareness is comedic, but if they are powerful and capable of revenge, they are terrifying (49b6-49c5). This terror of the powerful who lack self-knowledge may be reflected in the apprehension Socrates has regarding Alcibiades rushing into politics without the prerequisite knowledge.

that self-ignorance is a vice which makes one worthy of ridicule, Socrates provides a brief taxonomy consisting of three ways for those ignorant of themselves (*tōn agnoountōn autous*) to be self-ignorant (48d9).

The first way to be self-ignorant is in wealth. This type of self-ignorance aligns with the third layer of the self acknowledged in the *Alcibiades* — things that are neither part of our souls or bodies, but belong to us. The second is to be mistaken about one's own physical attributes, such as height, weight, or beauty. This type of self-ignorance aligns with the second layer of the self of the *Alcibiades* — the body. Again, the body is not the self in the *Alcibiades*, but it is more directly associated with the self than wealth or material belongings. The third way to be self-ignorant is in virtue. It is very common, Socrates thinks, for people to overestimate their own virtue, especially in wisdom. Virtue only exists in the soul, and so the awareness or lack thereof regarding virtue aligns well with the true self as it is identified in the *Alcibiades*.[62]

It is possible that the taxonomy of self-ignorance in the *Philebus* is only coincidentally reflective of the three levels of the self in the *Alcibiades*. However, that seems unlikely. It is not firmly decided where the *Alcibiades* fits in the chronology of Plato's work. Denyer (2001) argues that it may be a fairly late work, perhaps even written after the *Philebus* or around the same time. As noted in section 2.2 of this chapter, there is a significant overlap between the conception of self-knowledge in the *Apology* and in the *Alcibiades*. It is possible that the

[62] As Tarrant (2018) points out, in the *Alcibiades*, "[o]ne's bodily attributes are not oneself but what belongs to that self: not *me* but *mine*. One's external possessions belong to what belongs to oneself: not *mine* but *something still more remote* (131a–c, 133c–e)" (p. 224). I am not here arguing that the *Philebus* has an understanding of the self that extends to the body and other belongings, conflicting with the *Alcibiades'* strict view of the soul as the self. The soul as the self seems to be a consistent Socratic and Platonic view. While it is true that the *Alcibiades* claims the same skill allows us to know ourselves, our belongings, and our belongings' belongings (133e2), this skill does not seem to go in both directions. It is not possible for someone to know what belongs to their belongings but not to know themself. However, it is never questioned that one might know themself but not what belongs to them. The *Alcibiades*, then, seems to claim that if you know yourself (your soul), knowledge of everything else will fall into place. The *Philebus* makes no such claim about the relationship between knowledge about the state of one's soul, body, and wealth, but it doesn't rule this out either. Both dialogues draw an unambiguous connection between the proper self and the other two layers, which is in turn connected to self-knowledge (or ignorance).

Philebus expands this same idea even further, applying the possibility of self-ignorance to the three layers of the self explored in the *Alcibiades*. If this is the case, there is at least a fairly straight line from the *Apology* to the *Alcibiades* to the *Philebus*, each expanding the understanding of the Socratic conception of self-knowledge.

3.3 The *Laws* and Double Ignorance

There are two main passages in the *Laws* featuring self-knowledge. The first appears in the great prelude to the entire law code, in book 5. This passage warns against the inclination that human beings have toward "excessive self-love" (*to sphodra phileīn auton*). The consequences of excessive self-love aligns closely with the consequences of a lack of self-knowledge already described in the *Alcibiades*, and *Charmides* – that is, it tends to cause mistakes due to inaccurate self-assessment. The second passage is in book 9 and aligns much more closely with the description of self-ignorance of the *Philebus*. Although the *Laws* passages I will focus on in this section feature neither Socrates nor the phrase "self-knowledge" (or self-ignorance), I aim to show how they align with the Socratic conception of self-knowledge, the consequences of lacking self-knowledge, and the later conception of self-ignorance in the *Philebus*. At the end of this section, I will argue that the institutional design of Magnesia in part aims to protect against excessive self-love and double ignorance in positions of power.

The great prelude to the law code is sparked by the idea established in book 4 that it is better and more effective to persuade free citizens to willingly comply with the laws than to simply force compliance with threats of punishment. The point of the preludes, the Athenian Visitor says, is to put the citizens "in a more cooperative frame of mind and with a correspondingly greater readiness to learn" when it comes to accepting the laws as justified and

worthy of compliance (*Laws* 723a6-7).[63] To this end, many of the laws will be composed of two elements: the persuasive prelude to the law, and the law itself. Further, the Athenian argues, there should be a prelude to the entire law code. This great prelude aims to establish some of the basic moral principles and general duties of the citizens which inform and justify the laws. These moral principles include the primacy of the gods over all of humanity and the importance of religious rites (715e-717b), the primacy of the soul over the body and the body over one's possessions (726a-729b),[64] the importance and educational effects of praise and blame (730b-732b), the importance of self-control over the emotions and bodily appetites (732c-734e), and that the virtuous life is the most pleasant while the vicious life is most painful (732e-734e).

Since the soul is superior to the body, it is most important to care for the well-being of the soul. The most serious vice, then, is what the Athenian calls "excessive self-love" (732b3). We can understand excessive self-love as the tendency to over-estimate one's own abilities and to forgive oneself too easily for transgressions. This vice, the Athenian claims, is "the cause of each and every wrongdoing" because it blinds us to our own faults and makes us "bad judges of goodness and beauty and justice" (731e5-731a1). Excessive self-love explains why people mistake their own ignorance (*amathian*) for wisdom (*sophian*). The consequence of making this sort of mistake is that we tend to attempt things that we do not know how to do, rather than leaving it to those with the knowhow. As the Athenian says, with excessive self-love we will inevitably act wrongly by "not leaving to others what don't know how to handle" (*Laws* 732b1). These consequences of excessive self-love reflect the consequences of a lack of self-knowledge in the earlier Socratic dialogues.

While Plato does not explicitly use the term self-knowledge in this passage of the *Laws*,

[63] I will further explore the reasoning for the preludes and their persuasive means and ends in Chapter 3.
[64] While the ranking of the soul over the body is common in Plato, this explicit ranking of the soul over the body, and the body over its' possessions seems to reflect the same ranking in the Alcibiades (128a-130d).

the implication is that an excessive amount of self-love can amount to a lack of epistemic self-awareness and yield the same results. As Socrates states in the *Alcibiades*, "the errors in our conduct are caused by this kind of ignorance, of thinking that we know when we do not know" (*Alc*. 117d8-9). Similarly, in the *Charmides*, possessing knowledge of what one knows and does not know results in "lives that are free from error" (*Charm*. 171d6-e1) – a lack of this sort of self-knowledge, then, opens us up to error and wrongdoing. The warning in the great prelude reflects this concern that we will inevitably act wrongly if we are not willing or able to recognize and accept our own epistemic limits. The way to avoid this sort of wrongdoing, as we will see in the double ignorance passage of book 9, is to have epistemic self-awareness. According to the Athenian, an accurate epistemic self-assessment seems to require, in part, a moderate amount of self-love – enough to appreciate what we know, but not so much that we overlook what we do not know. Plato returns to the topic of what causes wrongdoing when the conversation turns to simple and double ignorance.

The discussion of simple and double ignorance occurs in book 9 of the *Laws*. There, the Athenian Visitor argues that inflicting involuntary injury should not be understood as an act of injustice according to the law, regardless of how serious the injury is (*Laws* 862a3-8). Rather than being punished for committing an injustice, the responsible party must replace or otherwise atone for the damage, but nothing more (862b6-c6). He is then asked to give a clear explanation of the voluntary and involuntary in order to clarify his argument (863a4-7). In response, the Athenian offers three "affections or parts" (*eite ti pathos eite ti meros*) of the soul which tend to turn people away from doing what they actually wish to do: anger (*thumos*),[65] pleasure (*hedonēn*), and ignorance (*agnoian*). While anger is described as an "irrational force" and

[65] *Thumos* is the same word usually translated as 'spirit' in the *Republic*, which there connotes something more like a competitive tendency, but is also associated with anger or aggression. Changing the translation to "spirit" or "pride" does not significantly alter the meaning of the passage.

pleasure a mixed influence of "persuasion and deceit," ignorance is divided into two types — the simple and the double.

Ignorance in general is understood by the Athenian as a cause of wrongdoing (863c2), but the severity of the wrongdoing depends on the type of ignorance. Simple ignorance is the cause of trivial wrongs (863c4). There is not much direct explanation of what simple ignorance is, but an explanation can be derived from the description of double ignorance. Double ignorance is not only being in a state of ignorance about some particular topic, but also being convinced of one's own wisdom about that topic at the same time — the belief that one has comprehensive knowledge about something while in a state of ignorance about it (863c6). When double ignorance is accompanied by power, the Athenian says, it is the source of great wrongdoings, but when accompanied by weakness, it is the cause of frivolous, childish overconfidence or the stubbornness of old men (863c8-d3). From this description, we can glean that simple ignorance is merely ignorance of a particular topic. The wrongdoings that accompany simple ignorance may be any mistake that people make due to a lack of knowledge in some domain. Trying one's hand at something they do not know about does not require some great overconfidence or belief in their own robust wisdom. Double ignorance, on the other hand, indicates some brashness due to the belief in one's own supposed wisdom.

The similarities between the double ignorance of the *Laws* and the Socratic conception of self-knowledge as I have laid out so far are clear enough. The description of double ignorance here seems little different from the most blameworthy ignorance of the *Apology* — the belief that one knows what one does not know. That double ignorance in a position of power is described as the cause of great wrongdoing reflects the importance attached to self-knowledge for taking correct action and making good choices in the realm of politics both in the *Alcibiades* (133c-135a) and the *Charmides* (171d-172a). And, finally, the description of double ignorance

aligns very well with the description of self-ignorance in the *Philebus*, particularly regarding the effect that strength and weakness have on the severity of the outcomes of action led by the mistaken belief in one's own wisdom.

Tarrant (2018) argues that by the time he wrote *Philebus* and *Laws*, Plato had moved on to consider only a negative sense of self-knowledge, which explains the emphasis on ignorance in these works. This would mark a fairly clear division between the view expressed in the earlier Socratic dialogues and in the later works. However, the Socratic dialogues are not short on talk of ignorance and the importance of avoiding action through ignorance, even if self-knowledge and the Delphic inscription are more often cited.[66] Tarrant's argument also relies heavily on Socrates' questions about things other than the self in the *Philebus* and on a somewhat bleak understanding of loss of the self to the state in the *Laws*. However, the Socratic dialogues and the *Apology* make a (sometimes obscure) point of examining topics other than the self, specifically in order to reveal a lack of self-knowledge in the examined party. Socrates does not reveal his interlocutors' self-ignorance only by questioning them about the self. Instead, by challenging the interlocutor on what they claim to know, Socrates reveals them to be ignorant of what they know and do not know.

Just as there is no explicit mention of self-knowledge in the *Republic*, and yet, I have argued, a clear association between self-knowledge and the principle of specialization, so too

[66] Some examples: At the end of the *Euthyphro*, Socrates expresses his disappointment that Euthyphro will not (or cannot) teach him about the nature of piety, because, if he could, "ignorance would no longer cause me to be careless and inventive about such things, and that I would be better for the rest of my life" (*Euth*. 16a4-5). In the *Gorgias*, Socrates argues that injustice, ignorance, and cowardice are bad things which corrupt the soul, and that corruption of the soul is the most shameful type of corruption because it results the greatest harm (*G*. 477b-e). In the *Lesser Hippias*, Socrates shows how important he believes it is to relieve the soul of ignorance when he says, "You'll do me much more good if you give my soul relief from ignorance, than if you gave my body relief from disease" (*LH*. 373a1-3). In the *Protagoras*, Socrates argues that "to give in to oneself is nothing other than ignorance, and to control oneself is nothing other than wisdom" (358c4-5). Acting in a cowardly manner is later shown to be acting through ignorance (*Prot*. 360c-d). Each of these examples show Socrates' concern about being controlled by, and acting out of, ignorance.

there is no explicit claim that self-knowledge or double ignorance directly influences the political organization of Magnesia in the *Laws*. However, the *Laws* features a far less strict version of the principle of specialization, which allows for political participation from much of the citizen population, each of whom will have other jobs as well. Instead of a hard separation between the classes of the society and access to political power which we see in the *Republic*, the political power of Magnesia is divided among a vast array of committees, councils, assemblies, offices, and courts. This separation of political power among a large swath of the population ensures that no one has too much political power and that the power that each member does have is limited in scope and, depending on the position, qualifications. These qualifications include age, relevant experience, and, in the case of the Officer of Education and members of the Nocturnal Council, knowledge of the laws and of virtue itself.

While this separation of political powers may not constitute a genuine state of epistemic self-awareness, it does indicate an attempt to engineer the practical effects of epistemic self-awareness. Rather than ensuring that each citizen holding office or participating in political decision making has achieved some minimal state of self-knowledge, the political organization of Magnesia is designed to limit the amount of damage that can be done due to any individual or group having a sense of overconfidence or double ignorance. By separating political powers in this way, Plato probably intends to address the major concerns of excessive self-love discussed in book 5, double ignorance discussed in book 9, and self-ignorance in the *Philebus*: the combination of unwarranted or excessive epistemic confidence and power.

4 Socratic Self-Knowledge as the basis for Platonic Citizenship

In the preceding sections, I have defended a view of what Socratic self-knowledge amounts to for Plato across a range of his works. On this view, Socratic self-knowledge is an awareness of what one knows and does not know. With this view in hand, I now turn to the question of how

this conception is relevant to Plato's politics. In the Socratic dialogues, Socrates is mostly silent on the subject of politics.[67] He does not explicitly denounce or endorse any particular mode of government organization or distribution of power in the elenctic dialogues. This is left to the middle and late dialogues. However, he does express views about expertise being a necessary criterion for making any decision well, which can then be applied to political decision making.

In this section, I will connect Socratic self-knowledge and Socrates' practice of elenchus to Plato's political philosophy. The self-knowledge which allows us to understand our epistemic limits also practically informs political self-knowledge in the context of a technocratic meritocracy of the kind explored in the *Republic* and in Socrates' Dream passage in the *Charmides*. This is because it is through understanding our own knowledge that we are able to understand our practical role in the social context. If we are self-aware enough to know what we know and do not know, we will be able to dedicate ourselves to the specific task we are most qualified to perform — and to avoid tasks about which we lack knowledge, including making political decisions.

Socrates' mission in the *Apology* seems to be focused on the individual under examination. He states multiple times that the aim of his usual way of conducting himself, examining people about what they know and engaging in conversation about virtue, is to encourage each of them to care for the best possible state of their soul (*Ap*. 29e3, 30a6-b2, 31b4-5, 36c4-d1). Although Socrates claims explicitly never to teach anything (teaching requires expert knowledge,[68] which Socrates claims not to have), he does examine the supposed

[67] Socrates mentions that he has steered away from participating in politics in the *Apology* (31d6-32a3), and indicates in the *Alcibiades*, *Charmides*, *Gorgias* that he does have views about what a good political leader ought to know or be like (having self-knowledge, wisdom, self-control, etc.). But Socrates has little to say about the mechanics of government or the organization of the state before (or outside of) the *Republic*.
[68] See, for example: *Gorg*. 519c-d; *Hp Maj*. 283c; *Lach*. 186c; *Prot*. 319a.

knowledge of others. By examining his interlocutors about what they claim to know and revealing inconsistencies in their beliefs about that topic, Socrates is attempting to correct the soul of his interlocutor. Reeve (1989) argues – plausibly, in my view – that these examinations correct their soul by disabusing them of the hubris of believing in their own possession of expert knowledge (p. 35-36). Thus, the Socratic examination is one part negative (disproving a false belief in one's own expert knowledge) and two parts positive (curing hubris and persuading them to care for the best possible state of their soul) (Reeve, p. 46). This correction of hubris, particularly because it is the hubris of false belief in one's own knowledge, seems little different from raising the interlocutor's awareness of what they know and do not know. That is, it is helping the interlocutor achieve self-knowledge.

While the focus of the Socratic elenchus seems to explicitly be on the individual, the aim of the result often seems to be social, political, or at least interpersonal. Socrates refers to himself as gadfly for the noble but lazy horse that is Athens (*Ap*. 30e). Socrates also twice refers to himself as a gift from the god to the city of Athens, one which will not be easily replace once they kill him (*Ap*. 30e-31b). In *Gorgias*, Socrates claims to be one of only very few Athenians "to take up the true political craft and practice the true politics" because of the kinds of speeches he makes (*G*. 521d9). Kamtekar (2006) takes this as a literal claim about Socrates' craft knowledge of politics, which would mean that Socrates has a significant knowledge claim that he consistently lies about when he denies having knowledge of anything worthwhile. Kamtekar focuses on the phrase "political craft" (*politikē technē*), which does imply craft knowledge – an important concept throughout Plato's works. However, and I think importantly, the main verb in this clause, translated as "take up" by Zeyl (1997), is *epicheirein*, which is most literally translated as "put one's hand" to work, "attempt" or "endeavor". In other words, Socrates seems

here to claim that he makes a genuine attempt at politics by trying to improve his fellow citizens' self-awareness and, therefore, their ability to care for themselves. We see this connection between self-knowledge and self-care explicitly in the *Alcibiades*, where the development of self-knowledge is also connected to the ability to care for others and for the city properly.

As noted above, the Platonic ideal for a well-functioning state depends on a principle of dividing labor among qualified candidates with the requisite knowledge, who are then committed to this job and no other. In the *Charmides* this arrangement is assumed to be entailed by a society which values *sōphrosunē* above all, defined as a knowledge of knowledge and ignorance. In a society in which all members have a keen awareness of what they know and do not know, there will be little trouble with people believing that they have the requisite knowledge or ability to take on some responsibility which is actually beyond their grasp. This overconfidence in knowledge is, again, a main source of bad decision making and wrong action (*Alc*. 117e4-118a8, *Phileb*. 49b6-49c5, *Laws* 9.863c8-d3).

The same principle is expressed in the *Republic*, first in book 2, where Socrates sets up a very specific division of labor based on natural aptitude and developed knowledge, and again later in book 4, with the definition of justice. Again, justice in the *Republic* may not be the exact same concept as the principle of specialization, since, as Cross and Woozley show, justice seems to be more concerned with classes of jobs and not particular jobs. But in any case, it remains clear that both nature and knowledge are deciding factors in the assignment or discovery of each citizen's proper role, from which they ought not stray.

The importance of the Socratic conception of self-knowledge for Plato's politics is perhaps best summed up in the famous Ship of State passage of *Republic* 6 (6.488a-489a). This analogy shows the tendency for the inept ship owner (analogously, the *dēmos* who lack

specialized political knowledge) to be overwhelmed by the persuasive words and trickery of overzealous and overconfident sailors (politicians and orators) who fight among themselves about how best to navigate the ship. The moral is that the true navigator or captain must have knowledge about the seasons, the stars, and the winds in order to control the ship well, but anyone who did not know anything about navigation would assume that a captain concerned with the stars was concerned with things that have no relationship to navigation at all. The problem expressed by the Ship of State is that, without an awareness of, and appreciation for, the knowledge required for particular tasks, disaster is inevitable. Decisions will be made by the ignorant and overconfident who overstep their bounds. This sentiment is expressed over and over throughout Plato's works, in the dialogues considered above, as well as elsewhere.[69] Plato believes specific and comprehensive knowledge possessed by the doer is a determining factor in whether any task will be executed well, but the consequences of the doer lacking such knowledge are much more dire in the political realm. The best political organization, in Plato's view, requires both specific knowledge of particular crafts and also a Socratic awareness among the citizens of their own knowledge and ignorance.

I have argued that the Socratic conception of self-knowledge is a necessary prerequisite to Plato's socio-political division of labor. While it is true that each citizen's natural proclivities place them into a particular class, at least in the organizational scheme of the *Republic*, the knowledge of a particular skill is the deciding factor for the specific job each citizen will have. But before each citizen can be trusted to stay within the bounds of their own qualifications, they

[69] See, for example: *Laches* (184e), *Meno* (88c1-e3), *Statesman* (298a1-e4). *Laws*, as noted above, seems differently organized from the other political works, but still emphasizes the importance of Socratic self-knowledge in the citizens for good decision making. That knowledge of what we know and do not know prevents wrongdoing could be seen as an extension of the Socratic dictum "no one does wrong willingly" (*Protagoras* 345e2-5, *Crito* 49a4). The "willingness" of the wrongdoing is usually explained in terms of what the agent knows about their action or the consequences of their action, namely that it is wrong, rather than the will or desire for the consequence.

must have an awareness of, and appreciation for, what they know and do not know. In this way, Socratic self-knowledge is a prerequisite for Platonic citizenship.

Chapter 2
An Analysis of Platonic Persuasion

In the previous chapter, I argued that Socratic self-knowledge is an important part of Plato's political philosophy. This particular kind of epistemic self-awareness allows its possessor to grasp what they know and do not know. Plato suggests in the *Alcibiades* that it is important for those seeking political power to have Socratic self-knowledge so that they are aware of their own political abilities and expertise. The *Charmides*, especially in the passage depicting Socrates' dream society, suggests that it is important for the average citizens wielding little if any political power to have Socratic self-knowledge so that everyone is aware of their own capacities and limitations and does not infringe on the domains of others.

There are also notable shifts in Plato's later and more overtly political works away from how Socratic self-knowledge is discussed in the earlier Socratic dialogues. The *Philebus* and *Laws*, for instance, contain only references to self-knowledge in the negative sense – that is, they focus on self-ignorance and the importance of avoiding it. In the *Republic*, we see a very similar social application of epistemic self-awareness to that described in the *Charmides* with the division of labor and classes under the principle of specialization. However, the *Republic* adds class division, especially between those with the capacity to wield political power and those without. The *Laws* has far less strict social divisions, but the vast array of committees, councils, assemblies, offices, and courts in Magnesia ensures that no one has access to too much political power.

There is also a shift in the *Republic* and *Laws* away from the Socratic attempt to cultivate self-knowledge in the individual through one-on-one examination and towards aiming to accomplish the ideal political organization through mass persuasion. Rather than trying to ensure

that each citizen of Kallipolis understands the extent and limits of their own knowledge, the founders of the city attempt to persuade them of the moral importance of dividing up labor, especially political labor, via the principle of specialization. In the *Laws*, the founders of Magnesia design the preludes and the early childhood moral education to work together in order to establish and then reinforce the psychological groundwork for the citizens to accept and adhere to the legal and social structure of their city.

In this chapter, I will establish the criteria for the specific type of persuasion that I argue Plato relies on for the mass persuasion efforts envisaged in the *Republic* and *Laws*. Since Plato is often critical of the use of rhetoric and persuasion, it is important to first lay out Plato's conceptions of different types of rhetoric. In this chapter, I will mainly focus on Plato's distinction between teaching and persuading, where teaching entails producing knowledge in the audience and persuading only requires producing belief. Despite the often-hostile tone of Plato's treatment of the act of, and nature of, persuasion, he does not dismiss persuasion outright. Rather, he places great importance on the epistemic authority of the persuader as a qualifying feature of the legitimate use of persuasion. What distinguishes a good instance of persuasion from a bad one, I will argue, is the epistemic authority of the persuader. The *Gorgias* does not criticize persuasion per se, but persuasion without epistemic authority. The *Phaedrus* provides us with Plato's picture of persuasion, short of teaching, from a position of epistemic authority. Once I have established the criteria for the artful kind of persuasion outlined in the *Phaedrus*, I will argue in chapter 3 that Plato relies on just this specific form of persuasion in the *Republic* and *Laws*.

In the first section of this chapter, I will highlight a few distinctions between types of persuasion present in Plato's writing. I will focus primarily on Plato's views of the nature of

beliefs and convictions, as I understand them, and the idea that rhetoric aims to produce convictions rather than knowledge. Next, in sections 2 and 3, I will show how the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* identify and assess the different forms of rhetoric used to produce convictions in an audience without producing knowledge. The *Gorgias* is critical of rhetoric but focuses on a practice of rhetoric without epistemic authority and which aims to produce pleasure in the audience. The *Phaedrus*, by contrast, focuses on a practice of rhetoric which is rooted in knowledge of the topic and of the nature of the human soul and the souls of the audience. This form of artful rhetoric aims to produce genuine benefit for the audience. I will argue that Socrates uses this artful rhetoric in the palinode of the *Phaedrus*, in which he relies on a mythical explanation of the nature of the human soul to convince Phaedrus of how to properly care for his own soul. Understanding Plato's conception of artful rhetoric will be important for understanding his views on the psychology of the citizens in a well-run state, the use of mythology at the state level, and the genuine moral and political benefit that he believes it can accomplish.

1 Persuasion and Conviction

Throughout his career, Plato is consistently concerned with the power of persuasion and the use and abuse of persuasive speech. He seems to have in mind at least three distinct conceptions of persuasion: (i) that which aims to produce knowledge, (ii) that which aims to produce conviction, and (iii) that which aims to win an argument. The first type of persuasion is teaching. Socrates sometimes refers to the ability of mathematicians to persuade others about mathematics and the ability of experts in general to teach which produces knowledge in the audience.[70] That is,

[70] This is an important point at *Gorgias* 453d-454e in Socrates' line of questioning regarding Gorgias' claim to expertise. Socrates makes a similar point at *Alcibiades* 114b-d, that someone who knows a subject, such as numbers or letters, would be able to persuade people about it either individually or in groups. There are also indirect references to persuasion for teaching in the *Republic* (536d-537a) and *Laws* (819b-d), both of which endorse the use

experts have the ability to "persuade" a learner about the truth of their craft. The second kind of persuasion is most likely to be what we have in mind when we use the term "persuasion" in everyday language today. It is the act of convincing an audience to hold some belief, whether it is actually true or false, relying on various means including rational argument, emotional appeal, moral inclinations, or tricks. The object of the third kind of persuasion seems not to be to convince the audience of any conclusion about the topic under discussion — at least not a conclusion to be taken seriously — but only to convince the audience of the speaker's ability to weave together reasoning to support any conclusion.[71] This chapter will focus primarily on Plato's views on the second type of persuasion, persuasion which aims to produce conviction without knowledge.

In Plato, rhetoric is often associated with producing conviction without producing knowledge in an audience of more than one person.[72] Since it does not aim to produce knowledge, rhetoric allows for convincing the audience of something true, something false, or something indifferent regarding truth and falsity. Plato seems to believe that the kind of persuasion which aims to produce knowledge cannot achieve its end in interactions involving a

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of play to teach young children mathematics. This, however, blurs the line between straightforward teaching to produce knowledge and a kind of memory training to produce habits of thought.

[71] See, for instance: *Euthydemus* 275e. Here, Dionysodorus tells Socrates that no matter which conclusion Clinians chooses to defend, he will be refuted. Aristotle devotes his *Sophistical Refutations* to analyzing common tricks for this style of argumentation.

This third form of persuasion is sometimes thought of as more comparable to a competitive game of wits rather than a genuine attempt at persuasion. Michael Frede (1992) points out a commonality between these eristic contests and the question-and-answer structure of Plato's Socratic dialogues, noting that in both cases it is the answerer whose view is being uncovered by the questioner. It is the answerer who therefore runs the risk of humiliation, which, in Plato's dialogues, seems to culminate in the trial and death of Socrates. Sandra Peterson (2011) compares eristic contests to modern "Yo' Mama" jokes, or "dozens" in which the quality of word play at the expense of an opponent decides the winner, while Hesk (2007) similarly compares the one-upmanship of comedic insults between characters in Aristophanes to modern freestyle rap competitions. It seems right to me, given the examples found in *Euthydemus* particularly, that Plato understands these eristic contests as somewhat frivolous displays of wit, which can unfortunately be mistaken for indicating genuine philosophical knowledge.

[72] Gorgias describes rhetoric as "the ability to persuade by speeches judges in a law court, councillors in a council meeting, and assemblymen in an assembly or in any other political gathering that might take place" and "the ability to speak and to persuade the crowds" (*G*. 452e).

crowd, for instance in the law courts or assembly. This is at least partly because of procedural limits on the time a speaker has to make their case (*Apology* 18e3-19a5; *Theaetetus* 172d-e, 201a8-b5). Further, the goal of interacting with crowds and juries is often to win popular support. Rather than aiming to produce in each member of the jury a firm, clear and true understanding of the topic, the speaker aims to say what is likely to be accepted as true by the audience as a whole (*Phaedrus* 272d-273c). Since the truth of a matter may be counterintuitive or otherwise oppose cultural assumptions, aiming for probable acceptability to an audience does not necessarily align with aiming for truth or the actual benefit of the audience.[73] In the *Gorgias*, which focuses on the nature and aims of rhetoric, Socrates does consider the possibility of a different type of rhetoric which aims at "getting the souls of the citizens to be as good as possible and of striving valiantly to say what is best," regardless of whether the audience finds it pleasing (503a-b). However, he claims, an example of an orator with these aims cannot be found.

For Plato, education requires a knowledgeable teacher as well as an active learner who is well suited for the education. The *Theaetetus* goes to great lengths to establish that the young man, Theaetetus, is well prepared for Socrates' line of questioning (143e-145d). After establishing that Theaetetus has studied geometry under a known expert, Theodorus, Socrates is also told that the young man comes from a good family and has a good temperament about his academic work. This example of Theaetetus stands in clear opposition to Socrates' usual interlocutors, who cannot name their teachers (*Alcibiades* 110c-e) and who only reluctantly pursue studying (*Ion* 532b8-c4), even though they are often of noble stock.

[73] An example of this problem with the sometimes counterintuitive nature of what is true or most beneficial arises in the *Statesman* (298a-e) where it is argued that when the many do not trust the experts and counterintuitive aspects of their expertise affect them, they will attempt to take away the experts' authority. In the case of the doctor, which is the main example of the *Statesman* passage, the ability Gorgias possesses to convince people to follow the doctor's orders without knowing about medicine would seem very practically useful.

There are a few consistent criteria that must be met for teaching to be possible, in Plato's thought. First, the teacher must have knowledge of the subject matter. This means that they must at least grasp its definition and essential parts and be able to explain why that specific definition and those essential parts are correct (*Phaedrus* 277b-c). Second, the goal of the teacher need not be to fill the student's mind with knowledge, but to turn them toward the truth of the matter and away from ignorance or mistaken beliefs.[74] Third, producing knowledge in an audience likely works best with an audience of one. It is unclear if this is because of (i) the natural dynamics of crowds to approve of whatever is most pleasant over what is true, (ii) the official and unofficial rules, regulations and customs for addressing crowds, especially in institutional settings, or (iii) the tendency of those addressing large audiences to aim to please rather than steer them toward the good. It is likely a combination of all of these things, at least some of which are relieved by a one-on-one interaction. Finally, in order to produce knowledge, the learner must be well prepared. This preparation includes physical and mental maturity as well as interest and natural ability.[75]

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[74] At *Phaedrus* 261a-b and 271d, Socrates claims that the aim of the art of rhetoric, and the nature of speech in general, is to direct the soul. This idea aligns well with the image of the charioteer directing the horses of the soul in Socrates' palinode. At 277c, Socrates claims that the same knowledge is required to use speech artfully "either in order to teach or in order to persuade". So, one must be well informed about the particular topic, the human soul, and types of speeches in order to either produce knowledge in another or to direct their soul in some other way.

It is notable here that Socrates consistently claims to have no important knowledge to teach others. The *elenchus* may instead be understood as turning his interlocutors away from their mistaken beliefs. The *Clitophon* highlights the problem with this method of refutation without the addition of positive knowledge or providing any direction for the interlocutor.

[75] The *Theaetetus* highlights this requirement of a learner well-suited for education, particularly in the description of the young interlocutor at the beginning of the dialogue (143e-144b). The *Meno*, however, may raise an important objection to this idea in Plato's epistemology. At 82b, Socrates aims to show that anyone, including an uneducated slave boy, can learn certain things because all human souls are immortal and have learned everything before. Here, Socrates equates the process of learning (μάθησιν) to the soul recollecting (ἀναμνησθέντα) what it has already learned long ago. This seems to imply that the learner needs no special preparation other than the soul's experience before entering the physical world. But, further, this theory of recollection may imply that the learner only needs to be led in the right direction toward the truth and the soul's ability to recollect what it already knows will do the rest. But, even if this were the case, Socrates' experiment provoking recollection in the slave boy, as depicted in the *Meno*, results not in him actually learning or recollecting geometrical principles, but rather in him realizing that "he does not know, neither does he think he knows" (84b1).

Plato conceives of the relationship between knowledge (*epistēmē*) and opinion (*doxa*) in two distinct ways: knowledge as true opinion with an account (i.e., knowledge as a special sort of opinion, one which is true and has the support of an account),[76] or knowledge and opinion as two completely separate kinds of mental states associated with different cognitive faculties.[77] On either view, convictions will be understood as a subset of opinion: a conviction is an opinion which is more firm due to some amount of persuasion or confidence in the belief.[78] For my purposes, conviction (*pistis*) can be understood as distinct from an opinion because an opinion need not be thought about at all or have any strong feelings or reasons associated with it. An opinion about appropriate behavior in specific social contexts, though deeply ingrained into our minds, is likely not the kind of belief for which many people can provide an explanatory account. In general, a conviction is a much more important belief and the convinced can provide reasons at least for its importance, if not for why they believe their convictions to be true.

In dialogues like the *Theaetetus*, Plato shows that producing knowledge in a crowd is nearly impossible, particularly under the time constraints of the law courts. However, it does seem possible for a crowd to be persuaded (*peisthentes*) of something true without, strictly

[76] This view is expressed most explicitly in the *Meno* and *Theaetetus*. Whereas the *Meno* seems to accept the 'true belief with an account' definition of knowledge (although still questioning the practical advantage of knowledge over mere true belief), the *Theaetetus* seems much more skeptical of the definition, at least without further elaboration.

[77] This latter view is most clearly expressed in the *Meno* and *Phaedo*, both of which utilize the theory of recollection and the immortal soul to justify how human beings can know abstract, unchanging, and eternal truths. The *Republic*, especially books 6 and 7, also relies on a metaphysical distinction between knowledge and opinion as fundamentally different, which implies that adjusting an opinion by adding an account would not be enough to transform it into knowledge. That the *Meno* expresses an acceptance of knowledge as both 'true belief with an account' and unchanging and eternal mental objects grasped by the immortal soul, is puzzling and may imply two kinds of knowledge or levels of knowable things.

[78] I use the Divided Line of *Republic* 6 as a template for this distinction. There we see Plato distinguish between that which is a matter of opinion (*to doxaston*) and that which is a matter of knowledge (*to gnōston*). Within the category of matters of opinion, there is the higher sort of opinion, belief or convinction (*pistis*), and the lower sort, imagination (*eikasia*). The distinction I make here is for my own purposes, however, and Plato does not make the same distinction between opinion and conviction.

speaking, having knowledge of it (*Theaet.* 201b). Rather than dispensing knowledge, these sorts of attempts at persuading a large group are often portrayed by Plato as mere crowd-pleasing.[79]

Producing conviction in a crowd requires at least one of two capacities: (1) the sort of cleverness gained through experience explored in the *Gorgias* as an ability to guess at what will appeal to and be accepted by most people, an ability that allows the speaker to gain the confidence of the audience (*Gorg*. 464b-465a), or (2) knowledge of the human soul and of the subject matter the speaker wishes to persuade them about (*Phaedrus* 277b-c). The former accounts for how a clever speaker without knowledge of the topic can still speak persuasively about it, an idea explored at length in the *Gorgias*. The latter accounts for the knowledgeable speaker who knows how to effectively make a point. Both capacities require some understanding of the human soul, the former through experience, the latter through a deep study of psychology. Gorgias himself claims to have the former capacity when he explains that he is able to persuade patients to follow a doctor's orders when the doctor fails to, despite lacking knowledge of medicine (456b2-c2). The doctor in this case represents the knower of a particular topic who lacks knowledge of psychology and how to appeal to different types of people. But, as Plato explores in the final pages of *Phaedrus*, not everyone who aims to persuade a crowd is ignorant about the topic or has some vicious intent.

The *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* might seem to present two incommensurable views of rhetoric, since rhetoric appears to be wholly condemned in the former and at least partially lauded in the latter. There is, however, good reason to believe that Plato is simply talking about two different modes of persuasion in these two dialogues and, therefore, presents two different but compatible views. In the *Gorgias*, Plato examines the dangers of persuasion from a source

[79] See, for instance: *Gorg*. 501e8-502a2; *Phaedrus* 267c5-d4, 273a-c6, 277d5-e2

without knowledge, a kind of persuasion which attends to base pleasure. In the *Phaedrus*, by contrast, he considers the possibility of persuasion from a position of authoritative knowledge, which aims to produce conviction (but not knowledge) in the audience and utilizes an understanding of the subject matter and the human soul to do so. In the following two sections, I will lay out the main features of these two forms of persuasion in the *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*, respectively.

2 Producing Conviction Without Epistemic Authority - *Gorgias*

The *Gorgias* focuses on what, for Plato, are the dangers of rhetoric and persuasive speech in general — producing conviction without the required epistemic authority. Here, the famous orator for whom the dialogue is named declares that rhetoric is the knowledge of speeches. It allows people to be able to speak well and makes the speaker wise in what they speak about (449e1-10). Socrates argues that nearly all crafts are in some way concerned with speeches — speeches about the object of the particular craft (i.e., if you know how to do something, you are able to explain it) (*Gorg*. 450c7-e1). Rhetoric is the only craft, however, on Gorgias' view, which is entirely concerned with speeches (450b10-c1). However, it remains unclear to Socrates just what the object of rhetoric is, since crafts like arithmetic and geometry rely much more on speech, or perhaps language more broadly, than activity. After a few unsuccessful attempts to identify the object of rhetoric, Gorgias finally comes to "the ability to persuade by speeches judges in a law court, councillors in a council meeting, and assemblymen in an assembly or in

any other political gathering that might take place" (452e1-3). In essence, Gorgias believes that rhetoric is the ability to persuade others in a public setting about what is just and unjust.[80]

The *Gorgias* divides persuasion into two broad categories: that which produces knowledge and that which produces conviction. Persuasion which produces knowledge is referred to as learning (*mathēsis*) and concerns things which must be true, while persuasion which produces conviction (*pistis*) is persuasion concerning things which may be true or false (*Gorg*. 454c7-e6). The difference, as Socrates presents things, is simple: it is possible to be *convinced* of something untrue, but it is impossible to have *learned* something untrue. Gorgias accepts this distinction. With this agreement, Gorgias endorses the idea that knowledge is infallible, whereas convictions are not necessarily true or false. However, since those who have learned and those who have been convinced have both been persuaded, there are two distinct types of persuasion: "one providing conviction without knowledge, the other providing knowledge" (454e5). Gorgias specializes in the former, which he identifies as rhetoric (454e11).

Socrates insists that what Gorgias is describing here is not a craft at all, but a knack or a routine (*empeiria*) (462d). That is, it is not based in knowledge, but only on accumulation of experience. Specifically, he has in mind experience of what people find pleasant.[81] Once one gains an understanding of the kinds of things people like to hear in general, that information can be used to flatter most people into compliance. Here, Socrates compares rhetoric to pastry baking, insofar as pastries satisfy people's base desires for tasty treats but provide little in the way of nutritional value and instead corrupt the health of the body (464b-465d). The pastry baker

[80] The very idea of a crowd implies that they are not experts in the subject about which they are being persuaded. However, Gorgias also explicitly states that doctors, physical trainers, and financial experts will be under the control of the well-practiced orator (452e4-7).

[81] This is essentially pinning rhetoric as appeal to emotion. Socrates alludes to this in the *Apology*, when he declares that part of why he has been convicted is because of a lack of "willingness to say to you such things as you would have liked best to hear" (38a).

need not know, or have any concern for, the nutritional value of their products. That is not their business. Their business is making tasty treats that people desire. Similarly, rhetoric, as Gorgias has explained it, does not require any knowledge of what will make a soul healthy or what is good for a soul. The orator's business is to produce speeches that are easily accepted by the audience. This is achieved through flattery, which is appealing not because of what is good for the human soul and what it needs to function well, but because of what the human soul tends to favor, regardless of the truth of the content or genuine benefit.

Socrates also makes a broad distinction between "crafts," which produce some real benefit, and "knacks," which produce gratification and pleasure masquerading as benefit. Socrates highlights this difference by distinguishing between "a state of fitness" and "an apparent state of fitness" in both the body and soul (464a). While gymnastics and medicine are the crafts which produce a real state of fitness in the body, cosmetics and pastry baking are the knacks which produce pleasure and a phony state of fitness. Similarly, Socrates explains that the true crafts which produce fitness in the soul are the political crafts (464b), with legislation corresponding to gymnastics and justice corresponding to medicine. In the practices that produce apparent fitness of the soul, sophistry corresponds to cosmetics and rhetoric to pastry baking (465c). In each case, there is a clear distinction between what is good and beneficial and what is bad and destructive. Socrates' view in the *Gorgias* is that rhetoric, sophistry, and seemingly all types of persuasive speech necessarily prey upon the basest desires of humanity and strive for the mere appearance of well-being, even at the expense of actual well-being.

This focus on base desires and mere appearances in the realm of politics ultimately leads to contradictions in who seems to occupy a position of power and who actually has the power. Socrates insists that in a democracy anyone who wishes to have political power must become "as

much like the Athenian people as possible" (*Gorg*. 513a).[82] As Socrates explains to Callicles, since a tyrant would fear anyone better than him as a threat to his power, and would despise anyone worse than him, the tyrant would only keep company with "a man of like character, one who approves and disapproves of the same things and who is willing to be ruled by and subject to the ruler" (*Gorg*. 510c). The tyrant, then, feels praised and secure in his power and the "yes man," as Socrates says, "will have great power in the city, and no one will do him [the yes man] any wrong and get away with it" (*Gorg*. 510c-d). Further, the tyrant is depicted in the *Gorgias* as someone who cannot do anything that he *actually* wants. The tyrant has power in the conventional sense of having the ability to order people around and execute enemies, but this power is nothing to Socrates without wisdom about what is actually good, as opposed to what merely appears to be good. True power for Socrates is the ability to achieve what we actually want, namely, that which is actually good, namely happiness. This other kind of satisfaction of what appears best, rather than what actually is best, is essentially the definition of flattery that Socrates provides at 465a: flattery is a shameful thing which "guesses at what's pleasant with no consideration of what's best." Flattery, then, and the use of persuasive rhetoric without the required knowledge to speak authoritatively, is always destructive, not only to the flattered by enticing them toward what is ultimately harmful, but also to the flatterer who is debased by appealing to the desires of others.

This condemnation of rhetoric as self-debasement for the sake of pleonectic desires for money and power seems fairly well in line with Plato's general view of actual and apparent goods. To illustrate how the use of flattery can be self-debasing, Socrates directly compares his two loves, Alcibiades and philosophy, to Callicles' two loves, Demos, the son of Pyrilampes, and

[82] This connection between the desire for political power and the nature of the mass of average citizens may partially illuminate the symmetry between the appetitive nature of tyranny and democracy shown in *Republic* books 8-9.

the Athenian *demos* (*Gorg*. 481d-482c). Socrates argues that both he and Callicles cannot help but reflect in word and deed what their beloveds say. However, since Socrates loves philosophy, and she is "by far less fickle" than his other lover, Alcibiades, Socrates can always be heard saying consistent things (482a6). This indicates the stabilizing power that Socrates believes comes along with philosophical thought. Philosophy has made his soul strong enough to even resist acting like the young and wild Alcibiades.[83] Callicles, on the other hand, has two equally fickle lovers and his only strategy for keeping their favor is to listen to and comply with whatever they happen to say in the moment. Socrates charges Callicles with being incapable of opposing his beloveds, and unless someone stops them from saying one thing at one time and another at another, he will "never stop saying these things either" (482a2). Socrates makes no claim that he is somehow able to resist or oppose what philosophy tells him, but this seems not to be a problem because what philosophy says is always consistent and reasonable. The problem with being incapable of resisting one's beloved is that the beloved is fickle and inconsistent, not necessarily that we ought to be able to make our own decisions for ourselves. On Socrates' view, then, we seem always to submit to something with which we wish to align ourselves. The main issue is choosing that alignment wisely. This will preserve and benefit our souls rather than degrading and twisting them into whatever shape seems favorable at the time.

While Gorgias claims to be able to persuade others regarding issues about which he has no real knowledge, such as in the example of persuading patients to follow their doctor's orders, he also claims that he teaches his students the nature of justice and to use the ability to persuade

[83] Alcibiades' testimony in the *Symposium* about his love for Socrates (215a-219d) indicates a positive effect of philosophy from Socrates to Alcibiades. Historical context, however, complicates this claim. Similarly, we see in the *Alcibiades* that Socrates claims to be Alcibiades' only true lover because he alone cares for Alcibiades' soul and is not merely after his body (131e-132a). Again, this seems to show a kind of power dynamic of influence in their erotic relationship, specifically an attempt of the older, philosophically driven Socrates to guide the young and popularity driven Alcibiades to think and act in way that are actually good for him, and therefore good for Athens. And, again, the historical fact of the matter conflicts with this view.

justly (460a4-5). However, he has already claimed that some orators use their persuasive abilities for wrongdoing, but that when they do this, we should not fault their teachers (457a-c). So, Gorgias has placed himself in a difficult situation. On the one hand, he claims some orators use their ability unjustly, and yet, on the other hand, since rhetoric, on his own account, deals most directly with issues of justice and injustice, teaching about justice is a necessary part of teaching rhetoric. This is why Socrates says that Gorgias' version of rhetoric is only the appearance of being a craft based in knowledge, but in actuality it is a knack based in producing pleasure (463b3). If rhetoric truly requires knowledge of justice, the orator will have to also be a philosopher.

The *Gorgias*, then, is mostly concerned with the problems that arise from the flattering nature of rhetoric. It aims to show how focusing on the base desires of the audience degrades the souls of both the audience and the speaker. The *Phaedrus*, by contrast, as we will see, is more concerned with the possibility of counterfeit persuasion than with the orator's focus on appeasing the appetites, although the two concerns are very closely connected. In the next section, I will examine on the basis of the *Phaedrus*, what knowledge Plato believes a well-informed and well-intentioned orator needs to have to practice persuasion artfully.

3 Producing Conviction with Epistemic Authority - *Phaedrus*

It is possible that Plato changed his mind about the utility and nature of rhetoric between the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus*. However, it seems more likely that the two dialogues simply have different subjects. The *Gorgias*, for the most part, takes up the topic of rhetoric in order to expose the limits of the orator's supposed "art of rhetoric." Further, Socrates attempts to dissuade Callicles from believing that his ends are justified and good. The *Phaedrus*, by contrast, seems to

take up the role of rhetoric as a craft which aims at leading the audience toward the good. In fact, Socrates himself makes this distinction near the end of *Gorgias*, when he claims to be "the only one among our contemporaries—to take up the true political craft and practice the true politics" because he does not aim at gratification and pleasure with his speeches, but at what's best (521d). While Socrates' main concern in both dialogues is, as always, the well-being of the human soul, the dialogues differ insofar as, in the *Phaedrus*, rather than turning his interlocutor *away* from a mistaken belief, Socrates attempts to lead Phaedrus *toward* the good and artful practice of rhetoric.

Much time and effort has been spent attempting to find a way to unify the *Phaedrus*.[84] It is often categorized as an erotic dialogue, focused on love, but it also focuses intently on persuasive speech and writing. Jill Gordon (2012) argues that this combination is no coincidence or mystery, but that erotic love and rhetoric, at least in Plato's idealized view of them, serve the same purpose of leading the partner's soul toward the good (p. 167-168).[85] She points to the frequent use of "leading" verbs (*proage* and its cognates) toward the beginning of the dialogue, between 227c-230e, which she describes as a playful and erotic exchange, as evidence for the mirrored roles of erotic love and rhetoric (p. 167-168).[86] I believe Gordon is right that there is an analogous relationship between lover and the beloved in an erotic relationship on the one hand,

[84] There are too many interpretations to list here, but Daniel Werner's 2007 paper "Plato's *Phaedrus* and the Problem of Unity" lays out four broad approaches to the problem of unity: (1) the thematic approach, which focuses on links between subject matter of the erotic and rhetorical parts of the dialogue, (2) the non-thematic approach, which looks to the drama, structure, and imagery, (3) the debunking approach, which dismisses the need for unity in the dialogue, and (4) the strategic approach, which argues that at least the appearance of disunity is a deliberate choice of the author to illicit a reaction from the reader (p. 93-94). I align most with the thematic approach.

[85] Jessica Moss (2012) takes a similar position, arguing that erotic love and rhetoric are two methods of leading the soul toward the good (p. 3). Harvey Yunis (2011) argues that ultimately, Socrates is saying whatever is necessary in the dialogue to get Phaedrus to turn toward philosophy (p. 6-7), which makes the connection between rhetoric and eros more coincidental than deliberate on the part of the author. I follow Gordon and Moss' approach that the connection is deliberate and further that it is meant to be explanatory.

[86] Yunis' 2011 commentary of the *Phaedrus* picks out the use of *proage* at 227c1 as initiating an erotic playfulness around who is leading whom (p. 87).

and the orator and the audience on the other. Specifically, I shall argue, they are both based in a particular type of knowledge and care which allows the lover/orator to lead the beloved/audience toward the good. This in turn helps explain not only the *Phaedrus*, but also Plato's view of political persuasion in the *Republic* and *Laws*. In this section, I will argue not only that the *Phaedrus* introduces an artful form of rhetoric which is applied in Plato's later political work, but also that Socrates' Palinode serves as an example of this kind of artful rhetoric.

First, the emphasis in the *Phaedrus* on leading and being led highlights the importance of guidance in an erotic relationship. Plato's Socrates clearly seems to think of erotic relationships as focusing on care for the well-being of the partner's soul.[87] This understanding of an erotic relationship as being mainly, or perhaps solely, concerned with the well-being of the soul may explain why Socrates in the *Phaedrus* is so concerned with correcting his first speech, which aligns with Lysias' speech denouncing the lover and praising the non-lover.[88] Here, we see Socrates characterizing the lover who is pursuing an erotic relationship as hubristic and out of his mind (237e-238a) with a singular focus on satisfying his own appetites, rather than on what is best for his beloved (238e). This way of portraying erotic love is much more in line with the use of rhetoric in the *Gorgias* than with the artful use of rhetoric identified later in the *Phaedrus*.

[87] As I have pointed out in chapter 1, we see this explicitly in the *Alcibiades*, in which Socrates claims to be Alcibiades' only true lover because he cares for Alcibiades' soul (see note 13 above). A necessary piece of Socrates and Alcibiades' erotic relationship is Socrates' attempt to guide him toward achieving self-knowledge. Socrates' seems to see himself as capable of this because erotic love is one of the few things he claims to know (*Symposium* 177e).

[88] That Socrates is led astray by Lysias' speech, and even defends the view, further highlights the power of rhetoric on the souls of the audience. However, Socrates is a special case as an audience member, not because he is so much wiser than the average, but because of his daimonion. At 242b-d, Socrates expresses that he has regret about the speech he made endorsing Lysias' speech because his "familiar sign" came to him and demanded atonement for what he has said. This once again shows that even Socrates himself is not in a position of epistemic authority to do what is good, but is only led toward what is good (or, more accurately, away from what is bad) by his divine sign, without being explicitly taught.

The second role the language of leading and guidance plays in the *Phaedrus* is in the context of the utility of rhetoric. At 261a7, Socrates defines rhetoric as a kind of leading of the soul (*psychagogia*) by means of speech. If teaching requires the teacher to produce knowledge in the learner, the teacher must do more than simply lead the learner in the right direction. They must also lead the student to acquire an *understanding* about the subject matter. In contrast, this psychagogy will only result in the audience being led by the orator to a correct belief. However, the distinction between being persuaded to have a correct belief and being persuaded to pursue philosophy seems to be blurred quite quickly. Socrates later claims that the true dialectician not only chooses the correct soul for persuasion, but also "plants and sows within it discourse accompanied by knowledge — discourse capable of helping itself as well as the man who planted it, which is not barren but produces a seed from which more discourse grows in the character of others" (276e-277a). This reciprocal benefit of philosophical discourse reflects the nature of pursuing self-knowledge as this is depicted in the self-seeing eye passage of the *Alcibiades* (132d-133c), and is contrasted with the harm done to both the audience and the speaker by the kind of flattery depicted in the *Gorgias*, with the mere appearance of benefit.

In order for rhetoric to be artful and therefore beneficial for the souls of the audience, the orator must have particular pieces of knowledge. Socrates states that anyone who writes speeches artfully must first "know the truth concerning everything you are speaking and writing about" and how to divide it into kinds (277b5-6). Second, they must "understand the nature of the soul," including which kinds of speech are appropriate for each kind of soul (277b8-9). The second requirement is more thoroughly fleshed out in an earlier passage. The knowledge required to teach rhetoric artfully requires knowledge of the essential nature of the soul — since speeches aim to produce conviction in the soul — of how the soul acts when it is acted upon by different

things, and finally of which kinds of speech are appropriate for which kinds of soul (270e-271b). Knowing the nature and types of human soul, along with the types of speeches, will allow the orator to eventually, through practice, know what kinds of things must be said in order to produce conviction in different types of people.

But what does it mean to know the nature of the human soul? Socrates raises this very question. However, there is some disagreement about what exactly he means. Socrates asks, "Is it possible to gain worthwhile knowledge of the nature of the soul without the nature of the whole?" (ψυχῆς οὖν φύσιν ἀξίως λόγου κατανοῆσαι οἴει δυνατὸν εἶναι ἄνευ τῆς τοῦ ὅλου φύσεως;) (270c). There is disagreement in the scholarship about what "the whole" (*tou holou*) refers to here. Since knowledge of the human soul is an essential part of artful rhetoric, it is necessary to understand what is meant by "the nature of the whole."

Hackforth (1952) argues that Socrates refers here to the whole soul, as opposed to its parts. This interpretation is based on the reference to Hippocrates immediately following the question, which indicates that a doctor cannot know the nature of the body without knowing the whole body (p. 149-50). By contrast, White (1993) argues that Socrates refers here to the whole of nature. This is because the nature of the soul includes "everything which can affect and be affected by the soul" — in other words "the metaphysical principles underlying reality" — but not "each entity in the universe" (p. 238). White disputes Hackforth's reading, claiming that, according to Hippocratic texts, "everything that the body experiences, both diet and climate" can affect the overall condition of the body (p. 239).

More recently, Jelinek and Pappas (2020) have argued, like Hackforth, that what is meant here is knowledge of the whole soul, rather than knowledge of the universe or of the souls of individuals. They claim that the analogy to Hippocrates suggests that the orator must have

knowledge of the human soul in general, just as the medical doctor must know the whole human body in general. The metaphysical principles required on this view, then, are those underlying the human soul, not the whole world.

I believe the reading of Jelinek and Pappas (following Hackforth) is to be preferred. This reading aligns well with Socrates' later claim that a teacher of rhetoric "will classify the kinds of speech and of soul there are" and how to approach them (271b). This, it seems, is closer to what Socrates means by "everything which can affect" the human soul. If it is true that "the nature of speech is to lead the soul" (271d1), then the effects that speech has on the soul seem like the relevant subject for the orator to know, not all the things which can possibly affect the soul. It is only with this understanding of Socrates' view of the epistemic qualifications for the proper use of rhetoric that we can finally examine particular uses of rhetoric in Plato and assess them as efforts to lead the soul artfully.

The most prominent use of rhetoric in an effort to persuade in the *Phaedrus* is the account of the soul in Socrates' Palinode (245c-249d). The beginning of this speech contains the famous myth of the charioteer, which serves as an analogy explaining the human soul. Importantly, Socrates begins by admitting that describing what the soul itself actually is would "require a very long account" and would be "a task for a god in every way; but to say what it is like (*eoiken*) is humanly possible and takes less time" (246a3-5). This is how Socrates transitions into his famous description of the human soul as being like "a team of winged horses and their charioteer" (246a6-7). Socrates, then, explicitly states for his audience, Phaedrus, the transition from a fairly short presentation of an account of why the soul is immortal to a helpfully explanatory analogy of what the soul itself is like. However, it remains unclear why Socrates shifts from a reasoned account to a mythological account of the soul.

There are three main ways of interpreting this methodological shift. On the first, Socrates aims to do more than just describe the soul, he aims to change the soul of his audience. On the second, Socrates does not have the requisite knowledge to accurately describe the soul. On the third, it would simply take too long to lay out a complete and accurate account of the soul. I will briefly explain and critique each of these interpretations before offering my own interpretation, on which an assessment of the souls of the audience is the determining factor for the type of persuasion the orator decides to use. Again, this interpretation highlights the importance of properly caring for the souls of the audience as essential for artful rhetoric.

G.R.F. Ferrari (1990) favors the first interpretation, arguing that Socrates wants to do more than just give an account of the soul, and that he also aims to change the soul of his audience, Phaedrus. If it is true that Socrates aims to change Phaedrus' soul with his account of the soul, Ferrari argues, a mere description of the soul would not be enough. Instead, Socrates must "paint a picture — say what the soul is like — in which he and his audience can recognize themselves: only so can the inquiry be meaningful for them" (p. 122-23). Ferrari bases his understanding of Socrates' motivations in the idea that learning about philosophy *is* doing philosophy. Since we already know that the soul is the source of all change in the world, an investigation into the nature of the soul "has the potential to change the soul of the investigator [...] to *learn about* the soul can also be — will also be, if approached in the right spirit — to *learn* a way of life" (p. 121-22). This interpretation, however, implies that a philosophically grounded account of the soul by itself actually *is* enough to alter the soul and, therefore, provides no explanation for the shift from reasoned account to myth.

Christopher Rowe (2009), by contrast, favors the second interpretation. He suggests that Socrates does not have the kind of divine knowledge necessary to give an accurate account of the

nature of the soul, but instead has a more limited, human knowledge of the subject (p. 135). After all, Socrates himself points out that it would take a god to accurately describe the soul (*Phaedrus* 246a). This explanation seems to align well with Socrates' consistent claim of ignorance of important things like virtue. However, we may question how Socrates can provide an accurate account of what the soul is like if he lacks knowledge of what the soul is. It may be that Socrates has only partial knowledge of the soul, and therefore can only communicate a simpler conception of its nature based in mythical imagery rather than a strictly reasoned account. However, it is unlikely that Socrates would engage in the kind of persuasive rhetoric he denounced in the *Gorgias*, which would only require of him some idea about what Phaedrus would like to hear and an incomplete understanding of the soul.[89] I will later argue that Socrates *does* have the requisite knowledge necessary to artfully persuade, and, therefore, to teach about the soul.

Harvey Yunis (2011) favors the third interpretation. He reads the shift to myth, not as evidence of Socrates' lack of divine knowledge on the topic, but rather as reflecting an awareness of what is appropriate for the given context (p. 138).[90] This reading remains agnostic on the question of whether Socrates has knowledge of the soul. However, it would still be difficult to account for Socrates' ability to speak about what the soul is like if we suppose he does not take himself to know the human soul. Instead, Yunis focuses on the length of the account. Socrates does indeed indicate that an accurate account of the nature of the soul would not only require a god, but that it would be very long (*Phaedrus* 246a). Since the chariot myth Socrates provides is roughly three Stephanus pages already, a much longer account may well take up a great deal of

[89] Rowe does not directly argue that this is what Socrates is doing in the *Phaedrus*, but I fail to see alternatives. Socrates must either be engaged in artful or unartful persuasion in his mythic explanation of the soul, and if he lacks knowledge of the topic he cannot be engaged in artful persuasion.

[90] Yunis also points out that Socrates appeals to time constraints twice in the *Republic* when forgoing a "longer and fuller account," first in his truncated explanation for the nature of the tripartite soul (4.435d) and later when replacing an account of the Good with the simile of the sun (6.506d-e) (p. 138).

time. Since Socrates and Phaedrus seem to have all day to wander around, lay under trees and share speeches, however, it seems strange to attribute Socrates' shift to myth solely to a time constraint.

Given the problems with each of these options, I offer a fourth interpretation which centers an assessment of the needs or inclinations of the audience as the deciding factor for proceeding with a persuasive speech. Some light may be shed on the shift to myth in the *Phaedrus* by comparing it to a similar shift in the *Phaedo*. Toward the end of the *Phaedo*, after providing the cyclical argument, the argument from recollection, the affinity argument, and the final argument, all of which contribute to Socrates' goal of proving the immortality of the soul, Socrates shares a myth about what the experience of the afterlife is like and the judgment our souls will face there (107d). Socrates claims that the soul will be judged on its orderliness, goodness and wisdom and that a wise and well-ordered soul will be familiar with its surroundings in the afterlife (108a7-8). By this point in the dialogue, Simmias and Cebes have both claimed to have nothing to say in response to Socrates' arguments and declare that they are quite convinced. Nevertheless, Simmias admits that he is "bound still to have some private misgivings" about the matter (107b1-2). The four arguments Socrates has provided have failed, then, to fully convince his friends of the immortality of the soul, and perhaps by extension, of the importance of caring for it properly.

The shift to myth in the *Phaedo* seems to reflect an assessment of the audience and a shift in method based on what Simmias and Cebes need to become fully convinced. They have accepted Socrates' arguments, but they remain unsatisfied. They require something more in order to be comforted by the idea that their friend's soul will live on after his body dies and that the care he has put into his own soul will provide his salvation in the afterlife. It is true that at this

point of the dialogue, time is running out before Socrates will drink the hemlock and this conversation, and all conversations with him, will come to an end. However, the time constraint alone does not necessarily account for the shift to myth. Crito even objects to Socrates drinking the hemlock so soon, claiming that "others drink the poison quite a long time after they have received the order, eating and drinking quite a bit, and some of them enjoy intimacy with their loved ones. Do not hurry; there is still some time" (*Phaedo* 116e2-4). Nor does it seem that Socrates lacks the relevant knowledge on the topic of the immortality of the soul in this context. He has already provided four proofs, so he does not need to fall back on myth to make up for his own ignorance. It is *the nature and needs of the audience*, then, in this case, which accounts for the shift in method, not the nature and needs of the speaker. Similarly, what we know about Phaedrus as a character, first and foremost, is that he is a lover of speeches. Knowing this, Socrates seems likely to have adjusted his method to fit his audience.

As shown in section 1, a time constraint can be a concern for producing knowledge in the audience. The thoroughness of the account necessary to produce genuine knowledge in the audience requires much more time than the assembly or court can provide. So, if the objective of Socrates' palinode in the *Phaedrus* were to teach Phaedrus about the nature of the soul, a time constraint could be a plausible concern. However, if Socrates only means to lead Phaedrus' soul in the right direction on the topic, as the overarching theme of erotic and rhetorical psychagogy suggests, time constraints should *not* be understood as the main reason for the shift to myth.

Since Socrates does not provide a reasoned account of the nature of the human soul, but only a myth about the human soul, he must not be attempting to *teach* Phaedrus about the nature of the soul. Instead, Socrates is attempting to *convince* him. If Socrates is not pressed for time, and has the requisite knowledge, the only reasonable explanation for shifting to a mythological

account of the soul seems to be an assessment of his audience — as long as Socrates does not intend to teach Phaedrus, but only to convince him.

But is Socrates engaging in artful rhetoric, which requires knowledge on the part of the speaker, or merely taking a guess at what Phaedrus would be most likely to accept? I believe there is good reason to think that Socrates is engaging in artful rhetoric in the *Phaedrus*. As stated above, for Socrates in the *Phaedrus*, the epistemic qualifications for artful rhetoric are knowledge of (1) "the truth concerning everything you are speaking and writing about" and how to divide it into kinds (277b5-6), and (2) "the nature of the soul," including which kinds of speech are appropriate for each kind of soul (277b8-9). I think there is good reason to believe that Socrates satisfies these requirements. There is some overlap between them, since the subject of the myth is the human soul, so the first and second requirements will be similar in this case.

For requirement (1), Socrates seems certain enough in his knowledge about the human soul to provide a non-mythological account of its immortality immediately before launching into the chariot myth. Further, Socrates seems consistently to believe throughout the dialogues that he has at least some knowledge about how to care for the human soul (see: *Apology*, *Alcibiades*, *Phaedo*, and, if politics is soulcraft, *Gorgias* 521d-e). This knowledge of how to care for the soul would seem, by Socrates' own standard, to require knowledge about the nature of the human soul.[91] It seems unlikely, then, that Socrates believes himself to lack the requisite knowledge to speak on the subject of the soul, which he constantly advocates correctly caring for. Socrates may understand himself as having only correct opinion regarding the nature of the soul, not

[91] We may here think of the horse trainer analogy of the *Apology* (25b). There, Socrates argues that only a few who have knowledge of the nature of a thing can properly care for it. Since Socrates claims to do nothing but persuade people "not to care for your body or your wealth in preference to or as strongly as for the best possible state of your soul" (*Ap*. 30a-b), he must believe that he has some knowledge about the nature of the soul. However, he only speaks in somewhat vague platitudes about not caring for money and things more than the state of one's soul, he does not give specific directions for soul care.

knowledge. This would mean that Socrates lacks an account for his beliefs about the human soul, and still takes himself to be qualified to persuade Phaedrus about its nature. While having knowledge of the human soul seems to conflict with Socrates' usual (and perhaps ironic) claims of ignorance, engaging in the kind of persuasive rhetoric without epistemic authority that he so clearly condemns elsewhere would be blatant hypocrisy.

I will focus on the appropriateness feature of requirement (2) — the knowledge of which kinds of speech are appropriate for which kinds of souls. Socrates seems to know the soul of his audience, Phaedrus. At the beginning of the dialogue, Socrates seems to know, based only on what he already knows about how Phaedrus tends to act, exactly how Phaedrus spent his day up until they met. He is able to guess that Phaedrus asked Lysias to repeat his speech more than once, that he took a copy of the speech and studied it all morning until he had it memorized, and that he then went for a walk in the country where he could practice reciting it aloud (228a-c). These two facts seem to indicate that Socrates at least knows the soul of his audience in this case, if not souls in general and their different types.[92] Further, in the same passage, Socrates describes himself as "a man who is sick with passion for hearing speeches" and a lover of speeches (228b5-6). This indicates that he is also likely to know about speeches in general, being such an appreciator of them, if not all their different types. The fact that his palinode is so effective on Phaedrus illustrates that Socrates understands the soul of his audience and which type of speech is most appropriate for him.

It may be objected that there is little support for the claim that Socrates has this sort of knowledge of the souls of his audience, since he often fails to convince his interlocutors that

[92] We may also take into consideration Socrates' claims in the *Republic* about the different types of souls which qualify the citizens of Kallipolis for membership in the different social classes. Further, *Republic* books 8 and 9 go into more detail about five different types of souls corresponding to different political regimes.

their beliefs are mistaken.[93] The result of his defense speech in the *Apology* should be high on the list of evidence against Socrates' satisfaction of this requirement. However, Socrates is sometimes successful at convincing people through mythmaking rather than argument. He does seem to convince Phaedrus by the end of his palinode, as evidenced by his joining Socrates in a prayer for forgiveness for their earlier speeches (251a-c), but not Crito by the end of his afterlife myth in the *Phaedo* (115c-d).

Socrates' chariot analogy, then, seems to be an example of an artful use of persuasive rhetoric, in which the speaker aims not to *teach* the audience anything, but only to *lead* them, step by step, toward a *belief* about the subject that is as close to the truth as possible. He is able to achieve this through the use of myth, conveying information about the soul to Phaedrus in order to lead his soul away from a false view of eros, and, therefore, a false view of what is good for the human soul. Socrates does this successfully, not only by using the knowledge he has of the soul in general and how to properly care for it, but also by using his knowledge of the soul of his friend, Phaedrus, and by custom tailoring his speech to fit him perfectly.

The *Phaedrus* connects rhetoric and eros particularly through the theme of leading and being led. In both pursuits, Plato seems to believe that it is more important for the lover/orator to be properly qualified to have the authority to guide their beloved/audience toward what is best for their soul. Both pursuits also run the risk of being used by the unqualified orator/lover solely to satisfy their own desires, rather than to care for the souls of their beloved/audience.

So far, I have shown how the artful use of rhetoric outlined in the *Phaedrus* is different from the seemingly typical use of rhetoric examined in the *Gorgias*, given the central concern with caring for the human soul in the former. In order to produce convictions in an audience with

[93] See, for instance, many of the elenctic dialogues like the *Euthyphro*, *Ion*, etc.

the aim of benefiting the state of their souls, the orator must know the nature of the human soul, the different types of souls, and what affects them and how, including speech. Producing convictions with this intention to care for the soul means leading the soul toward beliefs aligned with the good that will ultimately result in genuine, rather than apparent, benefit for the audience. By understanding these two distinct types of rhetoric and the requisite knowledge which distinguishes their respective practitioners, we can more clearly see Plato's justification for the use of rhetoric in the middle and later political works.

In the following chapter, I will show how artful rhetoric, so understood, is applied in the *Republic* and the *Laws* with the aim of benefitting the souls of the citizenry and the constitution of the well-functioning state as a whole. In the *Republic*, as we will see, the political rulers with epistemic authority are even justified in deliberately misleading the future rulers when it is ultimately psychologically and socially beneficial. Similarly, in the *Laws*, the Athenian repeatedly endorses persuasive tactics and methods for cultivating a set of shared moral beliefs and dispositions in the citizenry to better establish social cohesion. In both texts, Plato seems unconcerned with knowledge as a requirement for acting in accordance with the good. This reflects the famous problem in the *Meno*, in which Socrates suggests there is no practical difference between the genuine benefits of correct belief and those of knowledge (97a-d).

4 Conclusion: Platonic Persuasion and Social Self-Awareness

Plato often criticizes and even condemns the practice of persuasion. This may lead one to believe that Plato thinks producing conviction without producing knowledge is always bad, as it appears to be in the *Gorgias*. However, it is clear that he also believes that producing conviction without knowledge can be done artfully or virtuously, as long as the speaker satisfies a few requirements.

Those requirements are laid out in the *Phaedrus* as knowing (1) "the truth concerning everything you are speaking and writing about" including how to divide the subject into kinds (277b5-6), and (2) "the nature of the soul," as this determines what kinds of speech are appropriate for each kind of soul (277b8-9). The real problem with persuasion, for Plato, is that people use it for the wrong ends because they misunderstand the good.

In this chapter, I have shown how the *Gorgias* and the *Phaedrus* identify and assess the different forms of rhetoric used to produce convictions in an audience without producing knowledge. The *Gorgias* is critical of rhetoric but focuses on a practice of using rhetoric without epistemic authority, one which aims only to produce pleasure in the audience. The *Phaedrus*, by contrast, focuses on a practice of rhetoric which is rooted in knowledge of the subject and of the nature of the human soul and the souls of the audience. This form of artful rhetoric aims to produce genuine benefit for the audience. I have further argued that Socrates not only displays an understanding of artful rhetoric, but also is quite capable of engaging in it, given that he knows his audience and the topic he wishes to persuade them about.

In the following chapter, I will argue that Plato employs artful rhetoric in his political philosophy, specifically in the *Republic* and *Laws*. He recommends employing artful rhetoric in order to guide the citizens of each imagined city toward acting in accordance with virtue, and ultimately in order to achieve a maximally well-functioning state. As I argued in Chapter 1, a well-functioning state for Plato requires Socratic self-knowledge in the citizens. Socratic self-knowledge is a particular type of epistemic self-awareness which, Plato thinks, results in the possessor participating only in activities for which they are epistemically well-qualified, and avoiding activities for which they are not. A society with Socratic self-knowledge as its basis, Plato thinks, will be maximally efficient and well-organized. However, I will argue that, in his

later political works, rather than attempting to induce genuine Socratic self-knowledge in each citizen, Plato instead aims only to persuade the citizens to accept certain beliefs and to develop certain moral dispositions, which he thinks will achieve the same practical results as if they actually had Socratic self-knowledge.

Chapter 3
The Platonic Use of Persuasion for Social Self-Awareness

In chapter 1, I argued that Plato's Socrates has a specific moral-political goal that he aims to achieve through the examinations of his interlocutors. The Socratic elenchus is aimed, at least partially, at producing Socratic self-knowledge in the examined — an awareness of what they themselves know and do not know. We see the political application of Socratic self-knowledge in the "Socrates' Dream" passage of *Charmides* (173a-d), in which we are presented with a description of a society that places the highest value on moderation. In this society, no one would claim to have knowledge that they do not have, nor could anyone get away with claiming to have more knowledge than they have. Without anyone claiming knowledge and therefore abilities that they do not have, all members of the society would be healthier, there would be no false prophets, and all products of human labor would be of higher quality because they are produced solely by true craftsmen. I also argued that this same idea of the specialization of tasks among members of a society according to natural ability and developed expertise is applied again in the division of labor passages in *Republic* 2 (369c-370c), although the division of labor according to knowledge here is described as a matter of justice rather than moderation (*R*. 442d-444e). However, the *Charmides* provides no method for achieving such widespread social self-awareness.

In this chapter, I will build on my discussion of Plato's views on persuasion in chapter 2 to argue that Plato aims in the *Republic* and the *Laws* to show how mass-scale, non-rational persuasion may be used to achieve this vision of social harmony. Socratic self-knowledge itself is not simply deference to epistemic authority. Rather, deferring to epistemic authority is a practical result of having this type of epistemic self-awareness. What Plato aims to achieve in

these political works is the positive practical outcome of widespread Socratic self-knowledge without needing the psychological state. Social harmony is achieved in Kallipolis and Magnesia through moral habituation and education, the use of artful rhetoric, and the cultivation of trust in the political authority as an epistemic authority. The *Laws* is often, and with good reason, seen as a departure from the strict political hierarchy of the *Republic* in favor of a more inclusive and law-based political system. However, the *Laws* still requires citizens to exhibit epistemic humility and deference toward the political and epistemic authority. This requires that the citizens do not believe they know better than the established authority. While Plato does not seem concerned with cultivating genuine Socratic self-knowledge in the citizens in either text, he does, I will argue, aim at the social results of widespread Socratic self-knowledge. Plato's method for achieving this relies on non-rational and artful rhetoric as described in the *Phaedrus*.

The *Republic* marks a turn from the Socratic aim of achieving epistemic self-awareness in the individual to the Platonic aim to achieve social self-awareness. Social self-awareness in Plato's ideally well-functioning state of the *Republic* entails that (1) all citizens understand what role they are best suited for in the society, so that (2) each citizen will only do what they are best suited for and not pursue what they are not qualified to do well. Doing what one is not suited for would be meddling in what is not one's business, which is the very definition of injustice found in book 4. I understand (1) as an extension of Socratic self-knowledge and (2) as a desired result of Socratic self-knowledge. This is because Socrates aims in his usual *elenchus*, at least in part, to prevent people like Euthyphro from mistakenly acting unjustly due to overconfidence in their own moral knowledge. He aims to achieve this by helping them become more aware of what they know and do not know regarding some topic about which they claim to have knowledge. In the *Republic*, Plato shifts from this more individualistic focus of achieving epistemic self-

awareness through Socrates' examination of each interlocutor's personal beliefs to a social system in which epistemic and moral experts assess the souls of the citizens and assign them a role in the society. This can be thought of as a shift from achieving genuine self-awareness through introspection to a more externalized assessment, where self-awareness is achieved by receiving a label from a trusted authority.[94] In order to foster this social self-awareness properly and with genuine benefit to the citizens and the city, the self-awareness must be achieved in accordance with the demands of artful rhetoric laid out in the *Phaedrus*. Such artful rhetoric includes the use of misleading rhetoric like the "noble lie" of the *Republic*, which Socrates believes, as its name indicates, is not literally true. The end of perpetuating the noble lie, however, is to genuinely benefit the citizens and the city by instilling in them a set of true moral beliefs. Further, the rulers who perpetuate the contents of the noble lie have the epistemic authority to do so.

The *Laws* is sometimes interpreted as shifting away from the misleading and non-rational persuasion of the *Republic* to a focus on fostering virtue in the citizenry by producing genuine moral knowledge in them.[95] While the *Republic* relies on the citizens trusting the perfect knowledge of the philosopher-kings and queens as the embodiment of reason, the *Laws* relies on public trust in written laws as created in accordance with reason. In section 2, I will argue that the moral habituation and education of infants, children, and young adults in Magnesia is non-rational, and that the persuasive power of the preludes relies on that non-rational effort. The preludes do not always provide rational arguments for the laws, but rather persuade the citizens,

[94] It may be argued that any results in Socrates' interlocutors from the *elenchus* are also externally manufactured, since the *elenchus* is administered by an outside force, Socrates himself. I refer to the self-awareness achieved through the Socratic elenchus as "genuine" because the participants are much more active in the process of examining their own beliefs than the citizens of Kallipolis who are not expected to do much active reasoning, but to take in the reason provided by the authority.

[95] I will mostly rely on Bobonich's *Plato's Utopia Recast* (2002) for the view that the preludes aim to produce knowledge in the citizens of Magnesia.

using both rational and non-rational means, that the laws are justified, and provide reasons why they should act in accordance with them. Reasons, however, are not always grounded in reason alone. Not all reasons are reasonable, yet people may still be persuaded by them if they appeal well enough to emotional or psychological factors like fear, pride, or desire for revenge. Through a lifetime of persuasion, the citizens of Magnesia are inclined to understand the law code as well-justified and morally correct. I will argue that the Athenian's willingness in the *Laws* to merely convince people of what he believes to be morally or practically good, rather than teaching them, relies on the same principles of artful rhetoric laid out in the *Phaedrus*.

1 The Noble Lie and Persuasion in the *Republic*

The "noble lie" in the *Republic* is one of the most notorious passages in all of Plato's work.[96] It is here that Socrates proposes knowingly utilizing a series of falsehoods to lead the citizens of Kallipolis toward social unity and cohesion. The noble lie is more often framed as a kind of socio-political indoctrination than as a form of persuasion. This is because the term "persuasion" tends to imply the provision of reasons to believe a conclusion or accept a position. Instead,

[96] There is some debate about the translation of γενναῖον [*gennaion*] and ψευδομένους [*pseudomenous*] in this passage. Often, *gennaion* is translated as "noble," which is what I will use here, and tends to indicate something like "well-born" or "high-minded". Griffith's translation of the *Republic* (2000), edited by Ferrari, uses "grand lie" emphasizing the sheer scale of the lie, both in the sense of the lie's socially oriented purpose as well as its "massive, no-doubt-about-it" nature (p. 107, n. 63). Sheppard (2009) takes a similar reading (p. 58). Griffith's translation may allow us the double meaning of both a "grand narrative" and a "big lie". The translation of *pseudomenous* is perhaps more contentious and carries a bit more weight with respect to the acceptability of the practice Plato seems to be endorsing. Jonathan Lear (2006) prefers "noble falsehood," which takes a more neutral tone about misleading the citizens. Lear primarily frames the falsehood as an allegory for children and insists that, rather than being taken as literally true, it is meant to set the citizens up for a realization of the true nature of reality later in life (p. 33-34). Bloom (1968) prefers "lie," which is justified by his understanding that "the man who hears a parable is conscious that it is an invention the truth of which is not in its literal expression, whereas the inhabitants of Socrates' city are to believe the untrue story to be true" (p. xviii). At the extreme end of the spectrum, Popper (1945) uses language like "fraud," "hoax," and "cynical fabrication" to describe what he calls Plato's "Myth of Blood and Soil" invoking the fascist, racist propaganda of Nazi Germany (p. 132-133). "Lie" seems to be the most natural translation, since Socrates states that he does not believe the contents of the noble lie to be true but seems to intend for the audience to accept it, at least in some sense, as true.

Socrates seems to suggest something more like disseminating an ideology than giving reasons for accepting the ideology. In fact, rather than implying that the guardians and auxiliaries will be persuaded by reasons to believe the lie, Socrates instead seems to give only reasons for his interlocutors to accept the necessity of the lie's beneficial utility. In this section, I will first lay out the two different types of lying Socrates distinguishes in the *Republic* and highlight his justification of lies from epistemic authorities. Next, I will explain the content of the noble lie itself, including the myth of the metals, and the goals Socrates means to achieve with it. And finally, I will explain how this mythmaking aligns with the artful rhetoric of the *Phaedrus* and contributes to cultivating social self-awareness in the citizens of Kallipolis.

Socrates makes a distinction in book 2 of the *Republic* between two types of lies: lies in the soul and lies in speech. A lie in the soul, or a "true lie" (*alethes pseudos*), Socrates says, is hated by all gods and humans (382a). This seems to be because this type of lie requires one to "be false to one's soul about the things that are, to be ignorant and to have and hold a falsehood there," which is something that no one would accept (382b1-2). A lie in the soul, then, seems to be simply holding a false belief about the things that are. A lie is normally thought of as a statement coming from someone who does not believe that what they are saying is true and who attempts to deliberately mislead their audience.[97] However, as Socrates states, the lie in the soul is "the ignorance in the soul of the one to whom the lie was told" (328b6-7). The lie in the soul, then, seems to be the mental state of believing a falsehood, and not the act of speaking a falsehood with the intent to mislead someone else. It may, then, be more natural to think of the

[97] In the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry for "The Definition of Lying and Deception" James Edward Mahon provides a traditional definition of lying: "to make a believed-false statement to another person with the intention that the other person believe that statement to be true" (2018).

lie in the soul as the "falsehood in the soul," since *pseudos* could just as easily be rendered "falsehood" as it could "lie" in English.

The lie in words (*en tois logois*), on the other hand, is described as a mere image of the lie in the soul. That is, the lie in words is told by someone who does not actually believe what they are saying, but who aims to appear to believe it and for the audience to accept it as true.[98] The lie in words, then, comes from someone who knows better than to believe what they are saying. This is closer to what we would normally think of as the act of lying — deliberately misleading an audience. Socrates does not think of this type of lie as a pure form of lying. In fact, Socrates claims that lies in words are sometimes useful and do not always deserve the kind of hatred that lies in the soul deserve. He focuses entirely on the possibility of using a lie in words for some genuinely beneficial end.

The comparison between a lie in the soul (holding a false belief) and a lie in speech (spreading a false belief) corresponds to a difference in evaluation: the former is always bad, whereas the latter is possibly good, depending on the epistemic authority at the source of the lie.[99] It is difficult, however, to square this difference. It seems that Socrates is glossing over the difference between speaker and audience in his moral evaluation of these two types of lies. As Schofield (2007) points out, "a successful lie in words will be responsible for deception — a

[98] Presumably, someone holding a "lie in the soul" could speak about it and even convince other people to also accept that false belief. This would seem to constitute an "image of a lie in the soul". However, this projection or voicing of a false belief is not what is meant by "image". Instead, it seems that Socrates means that a lie in words is only reminiscent of a lie in the soul insofar as the lie in words is also untrue. The speaker of a lie in words does not accept its content as true but aims to convince the audience that it is true. The person who holds a lie in their soul, on the other hand, accepts the falsity as true.

[99] It may be argued that the result of the lie is equally or even more important than the source of the lie on Plato's view, since the lie is primarily an instrument for organizing the ideal society. However, the emphasis should be on the epistemic authority of the founders when they establish the lie, since, in general, if the liar has knowledge of the good, the result of their lies will be good. If the liar is not knowledgeable, but the result still happens to be good, Plato would likely not consider the act of lying good or noble, but only producing a beneficial outcome coincidentally.

'true lie' — in the hearer's soul" (p. 146). While it may be possible that the speaker is doing something good in conveying a lie in words to an audience, this speech act ultimately results in a lie in the souls of the audience. Since Socrates has already established that any lie in the soul is rightfully hated, it is not exactly clear why a lie in words would be acceptable, since a lie in words ideally results in a lie in the soul.

C.D.C. Reeve (1988) provides a plausible explanation for this apparent tension. Reeve argues that lies in words are sometimes useful because they are very much like the truth, and can steer the audience toward the good, not away from it. Therefore, lies in speech, although they may not result in knowledge about the good, produce false beliefs that may lead to acting in accordance with the good. Reeve gives the example of the imaginatively named Person A and Person B. Person B attempts an action because of a false belief that it is a good action. Person A has knowledge of the good and, knowing that B's planned action is not good, "tells B something that he himself knows to be false in order to prevent B from doing it" (p. 209). Further, Reeve claims that no one can "reliably lie in words until he knows the good itself and is in a position to tell real lies that mislead reason about it" (p. 210). In other words, one must first know the truth of the matter before they are able to lie about it. Thus, through the power of lying, A misleads B "towards the good, not away from it" (p. 210). Reeve admits that this is a particularly generous reading of the text, but claims that it is difficult to see any other consistent interpretation.

Reeve, then, like Socrates, concentrates only on the positive or "useful" form of lies in words. Reeve side-steps the issue of creating a lie in the soul with a lie in words with his claim that only someone who knows the good — a philosopher — could reliably lie about it. The idea seems to be that, even if the philosopher is lying, they are steering the audience toward the good. And the person lied to does not need to know the good in order to act in accordance with the

good. So, while the lie does not teach the audience about what is actually good, it does align their actions or their decision making about actions with what is actually good. It is important to note that Socrates does not claim that all lies in words are good, but only that they may not deserve the same hatred as lies in the soul. While it seems straightforwardly possible for lies in words to come from sources without epistemic authority, Socrates and his interlocutors are not interested in that possibility in this passage.

What neither Schofield nor Reeve acknowledge is that lies in the soul are supposed to be "about the things that are" (*peri ta onta*). There is a significant difference in the *Republic* between things which truly exist (*ta onta*) and those which come to be and decay (*ta gignomena*). Forms or ideas, like the good itself, occupy the category of things that are (*ta onta*), while physical objects, images and imitations do not. They are instead in a state of becoming or decaying. If the phrase "about the things that are" has any significance in the definition of the lie in the soul, it may greatly restrict the domain of lies in the soul.[100] Rather than false beliefs about just anything, a lie in the soul is specifically a false belief about the forms, e.g., the good itself. If this is right, it would be possible for someone to hold a false belief about particular objects or actions without holding false beliefs about the good itself, and therefore without having a lie in the soul. When Person A tells Person B a more dramatic story about waiting until the last minute to book a hotel than what really happened, Person B holds a false belief about the content of that story but, potentially, a true belief about the perils of procrastination.

At 389b, Socrates reiterates his position on lying by stating that "a lie is really useless to the gods, but useful to human beings as a form of drug [...] It is appropriate for the rulers, then, if anyone, to lie because of enemies or citizens for the good of the city. But no one else may have

[100] It could be difficult, however, to justify this particular meaning of "the things that are" since no such distinction between being and becoming has yet been made in book 2.

anything to do with it." Plato seems to think of lies from an epistemic authority as a way to benefit the audience and the overall society. When parents lie to their children by saying that there is a Santa Claus who rewards good behavior and punishes bad behavior, for example, this is a useful lie with the (optimistic) result of well-behaved children. The Santa Claus lie, just like the lies of the rulers on Plato's view, does not mislead the audience about the nature of good behavior, but only manufactures motivation for good behavior by misleading them about some matter of fact.[101] Socrates raises a very similar example in the earlier discussion about educating the guardians from childhood about the nature of justice and injustice (376c-377c).[102] Here, Socrates insists that it is best to begin education in music (that is, literature, poetry, and culture generally) before physical education, and to start with false (*pseudos*) stories which contain some amount of truth.[103] This is because early childhood moral development is of the utmost importance and requires great care and attention. Socrates seems to assume that learning about morality should not begin with meta-ethics or an overview of various moral theories, but with simple stories — even if they are false stories — that make it easy to see who is acting well and who is acting badly.

In a similar way, the noble lie may provide reasons for accepting true and genuinely beneficial social values. It is possible, after all, that we may hold a correct belief about the way

[101] It should be noted that the good behavior sought by Plato's rulers of Kallipolis does prominently feature citizens staying within the bounds of their own designated class, which could easily be seen as a manufactured good for the benefit and preservation of the ruling class foremost.

[102] The 'education' words here are θρέψονται and παιδεύσονται, both of which refer to early childhood education and socialization. These words tend not to refer to teaching adults new information, in the sense of producing knowledge about particular academic topics or technical skills.

[103] The *Republic*, like many of Plato's dialogues, is full of allegories, similes, and images which are meant to explain a complex idea in simpler or more accessible terms. The images of the ship of state in book 6, the sun, the line, and the cave in books 6 and 7, even the city-soul analogy is explicitly meant to make the task of defining justice easier. The state may be similar to the soul in certain ways and to a ship in others, but how literally we take these similarities depends on the purpose of the comparison. Similarly, we may consider Socrates' description of the soul in the *Phaedrus*, which, again, aims not at complete truth, but accessible truth for his audience.

to Larissa by remembering a fairytale full of literal falsehoods, but which nonetheless steers us in the right direction. In the same vein, the image of the team of winged horses in the *Phaedrus* is not intended as a literal description of the human soul and its parts, but nonetheless serves as a serious explanation of what the soul, according to Plato, is really *like* and therefore can correctly guide Phaedrus' understanding of the human soul and how to care for it. The guidance of beliefs toward the truth is the essential utility of myth in Plato, and, it seems, lies in words from sources of epistemic authority.

Perhaps the most notorious example of this sort of useful and beneficial lie in words is the noble lie in book 3 of the *Republic* (414b-c). In fact, Socrates refers to it as "one of those useful lies we were talking about a while ago" (414b7-8). The noble lie comes in two parts: the autochthony myth and the myth of the metals. It contains both unifying and distinguishing aspects. Each is equally important for the proper functioning of Kallipolis. The unifying aspect is found in the autochthony myth, which is meant to induce the belief that the citizens are born of the earth and are in some sense siblings. The distinguishing aspect is the myth of the metals, which serves as a justification of the class system and a warning against the classes mixing.[104] I will focus primarily on the distinguishing aspect, though I believe it may be argued that both aspects of the noble lie fit well within my thesis.

The autochthony myth aims to persuade the audience — which seems to mainly consist of the guardians and auxiliaries — of three main points: (1) that the education and training that rulers and soldiers have received was all a dream while they were inside the earth being formed

[104] While most of the noble lie considers only the citizens themselves and the attitudes they should have about the structure of their society and the land in which they live, the vague and threatening oracle at the end of the myth seems to be a lie about the attitudes of the divine toward the importance of the class system in Kallipolis. Of course, by this point in the dialogue, Socrates has already suggested changing the cannon of Greek poetry including the way the gods and heroes are depicted.

along with their weapons and equipment, (2) that they were then birthed by the earth itself, and now must deliberate on its behalf and defend it, and (3) that all citizens are their siblings, with the earth itself as their mother. These three main points taken together tie the guardians and auxiliaries to the land in which they live and promote an extreme loyalty to it. They also breed a fierceness toward outsiders and feelings of solidarity toward each other.

The myth of the metals is a kind of foundational myth for the guardians and auxiliaries of Kallipolis which explains, in metaphorical language, the class system and the importance of keeping the classes separate and distinct. This myth posits that each citizen of Kallipolis has a metal mixed into their souls: gold in the ruling class, silver in the auxiliaries, and iron or bronze in the farmers and craftsmen. The metallic substance in their souls determines their place in society. As Socrates says, the god "mixed gold into those of you who are capable of ruling, which is why they are the most honorable" (415a3-4). So, it is not that whoever ends up with a gold soul gets to rule, but that whoever has the natural ability to rule receives gold in their soul. The rulers in particular must make sure that their offspring have golden souls. If they do not, they should not rule, but must join whichever class their soul truly belongs to. This is because it is simply not in their nature to rule. There is no room for nepotism, then, in the ideology embedded in this myth. There are only the natural capacities on display to serve as qualifiers for class membership. The same is, of course, true of those with iron souls who produce offspring with a silver or gold soul. These offspring, too, must join their proper class according to their natural abilities. Finally, Socrates ends the myth by stating that "there is an oracle that the city will be ruined if it ever has an iron or a bronze guardian" (415c5-6).

This myth of the metals is a fairly short passage, but it has garnered a great deal of attention in Platonic scholarship. Much of the scholarship on the noble lie is centered around

either the ethics of lying to the citizens or the practicality of the lie. Since the second world war and the rise of fascism, the noble lie has been interpreted by some as a totalitarian tool, especially by Popper (1945) and Crossman (1939). These scholars tend to understand the use of falsehoods for political benefit as condescending elitism at best and draconian, racist propaganda at worst. The comparison to 20th century fascist leaders is not entirely out of place, since Socrates insists on the use of a kind of 'big lie' or 'grand narrative' which includes not only a natural social hierarchy, but also, as Popper points out, a "blood and soil" ideology.

Later scholars like Strauss in *The City and the Man* (1964), and Bloom in his commentary on the *Republic* (1968) have much more generous readings of the noble lie and Socrates' intentions. They tend to take the guardians, as they are described by Socrates in the text, as genuinely interested in the public good. By comparison, Popper and Crossman seem almost cynical in their interpretations of Socrates' intentions to more or less get away with fooling the majority of the population into accepting their own political oppression. The Straussian view seems to take more seriously Plato's idea that the guardian class will have true moral wisdom and, therefore, will harbor no pleonectic desires to consolidate power for selfish reasons. This reading is more in line with the way the guardians are presented in the text itself. However, it still runs the risk of endorsing the kind of social elitism in the real world that Popper seems most concerned with.

While Popper and Strauss seem to disagree on whether the guardians could actually be epistemically and, therefore, on Plato's view, morally superior, Julia Annas (1981) argues that even if the guardians were superior in these ways, they would still not have the right to lie to the citizens. Even if we accept that the guardians are properly trained and educated and have the right sort of dispositions, there may be a fundamental double standard inherent in the use of lying

by those who love truth. The problem Annas points to here is one of everyday morality for us today. Even if the guardians are not power-hungry authoritarians, as Popper portrays them, there is still a problem with a two-tiered morality in which the guardians treat each other one way and the rest of the citizens another. Annas claims that, even though the guardians are also meant to believe the noble lie, they are "surely thought of as believing the myth on a rather different level from the others" (p. 108). There is, however, no real evidence for this distinction in the text.

I mostly agree with Annas' picture, but I believe her view about who has access to higher levels of understanding is too narrow. Annas seems to assume that only a small group of people with supposedly superior intelligence would grasp the meaning of the myth of the metals without accepting it as literally true. She does not, however, seem to think that the everyday citizen is capable of this level of understanding. However, it would seem to be a great stretch of the imagination to assume that adults, whatever their level of education, who have lived and worked and produced children together, would honestly hold the belief that they and everyone they know were literally siblings born of the earth.

In fact, there are many examples of shared moral beliefs which are held by very many people as true or correct, but not as literally true. For example, many moral clichés are often taken to be meaningfully true and morally correct but not literally true: "you are what you eat," "waste not, want not," "you've got to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps," etc. These phrases are often believed to be correct in the sense of being morally significant, but not literally true, even by the masses. These phrases themselves are not true and may even be absurd on the surface. And yet, they are taken to express morally important truths about the world, how it works, what to value, and how to conduct oneself.[105] Further, it is not commonly believed that

[105] Malcolm Schofield (2007) points to 412c-d as evidence that Socrates has an underlying aim in creating the noble lie to get the citizens to care for the city by persuading them that the interests of the city are the same as their own

people of a higher social class are "blue blooded" in any literal sense, but it is more commonly believed, unfortunately, that there are natural differences between the people who occupy different social positions.[106] It is difficult to say which parts of the noble lie Socrates thinks should or would be taken literally and which figuratively, but the more important point, I think, is that each piece is intended to be taken seriously as a social value.[107]

To be clear, it is not my goal in this section to analyze and discuss the possible moral or political merits and demerits of the myth of the metals. Instead, I will assume for the sake of argument that what Socrates says about the intended effects of the lie is true, that is, that it will make the citizens "care more for the city and for each other" (415d4). What I aim to show is how the use of, and justification for, the noble lie aligns with the artful rhetoric of the *Phaedrus* and reflects the intended political effects of Socratic self-knowledge.

As a reminder, the epistemic qualifications which must be satisfied for artful rhetoric are knowledge of: (1) "the truth concerning everything you are speaking and writing about" and how to divide it into kinds (*Phdr*. 277b5-6), and (2) "the nature of the soul," including which kinds of speech are "appropriate for each kind of soul" (*Phdr*. 277b8-9). Although at this point in the

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interests. The noble lie, on this view, does not aim to instill false content in the minds of the citizens of Kallipolis, but to provide the convictions and motivation "to care more about the city and one another" (415d). The concern that it is described as a "lie" or "falsehood" and a "device" as well as a true conviction to be utilized for virtuous ends is, at least somewhat, relieved by the fact that it is aimed at children, and that the use of myths which are not understood as literally true is fairly common practice for early moral education. More on this in section 2.

[106] In the United States, for instance, the "American Dream" of achieving financial prosperity through hard work is central to the moral culture. One fairly common place belief as a result is that if someone is impoverished it is because they do not work hard. While there is no prominent belief of metallic souls in the United States, this cultural value of "bootstrapping" one's way to prosperity accomplishes the same goal of the myth of the metals, namely justifying the social or economic status of any citizen (or non-citizen) by pointing to the kind of person they *really* are. The development of this cultural value in the US, however, is much more complicated than Socrates' plan for social engineering.

[107] Perhaps the most difficult piece of the noble lie to reckon — that the experience of early education was all a dream, and the citizens were actually born of the earth as young teens — may be true in a less than literal sense as well. The stories they learn are edited down with the purpose of simplifying the message of what is good and bad. Once they've learned the simplified material, they may begin engaging with the complexity of the physical world. Again, taking this idea of moving from a sort of dream world of early education to the real world as figuratively truthful is not uncommon even in our current social context in North America. We often hear warnings, for instance, that the university is not "the real world."

Republic, the political rulers of Kallipolis are not explicitly required to be philosophers, this is revealed to have been the case all along in book 5.[108] The philosopher of the *Republic* must know the underlying nature of the world, including the good itself and the nature of the human soul. So, it seems reasonable to expect that the rulers of Kallipolis, who are responsible for spreading the lie, will know the truth about the soul in general and about their own souls. It also seems obviously the case that they will know the truth about how they are born and raised.[109]

The *Republic* (and not only in the noble lie) displays the same aim as the use of artful rhetoric in the *Phaedrus,* namely to lead the souls of the audience (in this case, the citizens of Kallipolis) for genuine benefit. The falsehoods about the world and the soul in the noble lie follow the sweeping censorship of the Homeric and Hesiodic myths. The point of the myths is less to give the young future citizens a literally accurate understanding of the world, and more to give them a clear and true sense of what is good and good for them from an early age. As Socrates says, great care must be taken to ensure that "the first stories they hear about virtue are the best ones for them to hear" (2.378e2).

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[108] There is some controversy here. For instance, C.D.C. Reeve (1988) argues that Socrates actually describes *three* distinct cities throughout the *Republic*, though the third incorporates the second, which incorporates the first (p. 204). The third polis is introduced for Reeve precisely when the philosopher-king is introduced (p. 171-172). This means that Socrates does not intend for the ruling class to be philosophers all along, but instead that the city with philosophers-kings (473b-544b) is distinct from the first simple city (369a-372d) *and* from the second more complex city described in books 4 and 5 (372c-471c). However, this remains a minority view. Moreover, it seems difficult to sustain.
However, Socrates hints that the rulers should be philosophical in book 2 when he claims that the future guardians "besides being spirited, must also be by nature philosophical" (375e7-8). This is somewhat awkward because Socrates seems to mean by 'philosophical' something like "being friendly to people and things that they know and suspicious and aggressive toward things they do not know" in the way a good guard dog is, which we would not tend to think of as particularly philosophical. Again, in book 5, when Socrates is defending his proposal that women should be eligible to hold leadership positions, part of his defense is that "one woman with be philosophical or a lover of wisdom, while another hates wisdom" and that the same is true of spiritedness (456a3-4). This suggests that Socrates and his interlocutors believe that the guardian has a philosophical nature, regardless of gender. Again, it is not exactly clear what Socrates means by "philosophical" here. However, it would seem strange for Socrates to suggest that the guardians should have a philosophical nature from fairly early on in the discussion, but intend to shift to talking about a distinct city when he claims that the rulers need to be philosophers (473c10-e4).

[109] It would be incredibly difficult to sustain the level of delusion necessary to ignore the existence of presumably a great number of teachers.

Similarly, the noble lie and other myths in the *Republic* do not aim to rationally engage with the imagined citizens (or Socrates' interlocutors), but only to persuade them to act in accordance with the good. The only class which would need to be convinced rationally or taught about the organization of the state would be the guardians themselves. These goals would seem to be achieved through their philosophical training and political experience in lower offices. However, the future guardians are first introduced to these ideas through myth and stories, along with everyone else.

At this point in the dialogue, Socrates is committed to the city-soul analogy. The tripartite nature of the city is essential to the conception of justice, as defined in book 4. There, we see that justice is a matter of each class doing the work that is proper to it and not meddling in the work of the others (4.433a). The main point of the myth of the metals is revealed in the final, supposedly divine, warning that "the city will be ruined if it ever has an iron or a bronze guardian" (4.415a5-6), which is simply a mythologized statement of the definition of justice.[110] Justice itself is not defined in the myth for the citizens to learn and know, but it is mythologically illustrated in such a way that even children can understand the social and moral importance of an awareness of one's own capacities and role in the city. This is the rhetorical act of creating a correct belief through false content. That is, the moral of the myth is true, but the literal content concerning the metallic substance in the human soul is false. The idea, in other words is not to simply exercise intellectual control over the citizens, but to instill in them true moral beliefs about the best organization of the society and their place in it.

[110] In book 4, Socrates comes to the conclusion (perhaps more of a realization) that justice is "doing one's own work and not meddling in what isn't one's own" (433a8-b1), and reiterates later that the opposite of injustice is "for the money-making, auxiliary, and guardian classes each to do its own work in the city" (434c7-8).

With the myth of the metals, then, Socrates seems to intend to circumvent the need for the citizens of Kallipolis to engage in personal examination of what they know and do not know. However, just as the use of artful rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* does not aim to induce actual knowledge in the audience, but only to lead them to be convinced of some correct belief, so too the use of the noble lie and in particular the myth of the metals does not aim to induce genuine Socratic self-knowledge. It instead aims to lead the audience to adopt a set of beliefs which will produce similar results to the dream society of the *Charmides,* which is based on genuine Socratic self-knowledge – namely, the belief that each citizen has a specific role in the society to fulfill based on their psychological nature, training, and epistemic abilities.

2 The Political Persuasion of the *Laws*

The *Laws* contains a less idealistic and more detailed examination of a well-functioning state than the *Republic*. The political discussion in the *Republic* tends to be more abstract and aims to define justice itself and defend the just life through understanding the ideal state, which they call Kallipolis.[111] The discussion featured in the *Laws* is meant to feed directly into the founding of an actual city in Crete, which the Athenian Visitor and his two interlocutors name Magnesia (702a-d). Further, the *Laws* explicitly aims to describe the second-best state rather than the ideal state (739e) and indicates a shift from total deference to persons with perfect, unchanging, and eternal knowledge of the good itself to a heavier reliance on written laws.[112] This does not mean

[111] Socrates in the *Republic* repeatedly argues that the city described in their conversation could come to exist in the physical world, given various caveats, such as philosophers being kings (473c-e) or sending everyone over the age of 10 into exile (540e-541a). However, the end of book 9 suggests that the main point of the discussion is not to design a city with the aim of establishing it in the physical world, but to have an ideal after which to model ourselves (592b).

[112] The reader of the *Laws* may here be reminded of the ranking of constitutions in Plato's *Statesman*, another later dialogue in which Socrates is present almost only as audience to the discussion and adds nothing of substance. There, Plato's Eleatic Stranger suggests that the second-best city, one without recognized political experts, is one with absolute and unchangeable laws (*S.* 279e-298e). This is quite different from Magnesia's system

that the *Laws* does not entail some amount of idealism. But rather than starting with an ideal structure, the *Laws* starts from a more human place with aspirations to something more ideal through the application of human reason.[113] Part of that political aspiration is the addition of preludes to the law code, which are meant to explain and justify the laws and to encourage compliance.

In the first part of this section, I will argue that, even though the Athenian Visitor describes the preludes as having a kind of teaching and learning relationship with the citizens, the preludes themselves do not necessarily reflect this description of the laws as teachers, at least not in the strict Socratic sense. Instead, I follow Annas and Stalley in their arguments that the Athenian Visitor sometimes endorses less-than-rational means of persuasion in the preludes. The Athenian often expresses his willingness to merely convince people of what he believes to be true, rather than teaching them, and highlights the importance of emotional appeals and a psychological assessment of the audience to achieve this. In this way, I will argue, the *Laws* utilizes the principles of virtuous or artful rhetoric laid out in the *Phaedrus*.

In the second part of this section, I will show that the early childhood moral education plan of Magnesia, which relies on storytelling, music, and possibly even lying, is a necessary part of developing virtue in the citizens, on the Athenian's view. Since this moral education is aimed at children, it is based more in play and storytelling than rational discourse. The early

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of continual legislative upkeep through various committees and assemblies, but the focus on law is presented as second best in both of these later works. The law code of Magnesia is, of course, meant to be stable and concrete, but the Athenian makes room for adjustment, especially from the select few who are allowed to travel abroad and report back to the Nocturnal Council about the laws of other cities "so that he can see to the strengthening of the customs of his country that are soundly based, and the refurbishing of any that are defective. Without this observation and research a state will never stay at the peak of perfection; nor will it if the observers are incompetent" (*L*. 951c3-6).

[113] The idea of starting from an assumption of human fallibility with aspirations to achieve something more divine through human reason may be reflected in the path which the three members of the dialogue take on their journey, the road from the city of Knossos to the cave and temple of Zeus (*L*. 625b2).

moral education develops an association between virtue and happiness, and, therefore, a desire to act in accordance with virtue. Without this early, non-rational, moral development, the preludes would be much less convincing to the adult citizens. This is because the persuasive power of the preludes relies on appealing to a set of moral beliefs shared by all citizens. To begin, I will lay out some of the main features of the preludes and some prominent interpretations of their purpose.

The preludes are introduced in book 4 of the *Laws* with an analogy. After asking whether the lawgiver should make some sort of attempt at "encouragement or persuasion (*peithous*)", or instead "simply threaten the penalty for disobedience," the Athenian compares the act of passing legislation to a doctor prescribing treatment (720a).[114] The Athenian insists there are two kinds of doctors: those who treat slaves and those who treat free men. The former gives the patient no explanation of their illness or treatment, "he simply prescribes what he thinks best in the light of experience, as if he had precise knowledge, and with the self-confidence of a dictator" (720c6-7). The latter consults the patient to build a case study and "gives no prescription until he has somehow gained the patient's consent" and "always tames them with persuasion (*meta peithous hemeroumenon aei*)" (720d6-8).[115] The former is described as using a single method, while the latter uses the "double method" — that is, one that involves not only prescribing treatment, but also gaining cooperation from the patient through persuasion.

[114] The connection here may not only be that in each instance the figure in a position of authority is trying to get the audience to do or comply with something, but that in both cases the authority is attempting to keep the audience in some way — physically, morally, or socially — healthy.

[115] There is a connection to be made here, not to the noble lie passage of *Republic* 3, but to the "beast of the many" passage of *Republic* 6. There, Socrates compares the ability of sophists and orators to appease a crowd to the ability of someone to calm a strong beast after spending time observing its behavior. Socrates believes this is not real knowledge and does not concern the good, but Plato uses a form of the same "taming" word when he has Socrates say that the clever orator will notice "what tones of voice make [the beast] tame (*hemeroutai*) or angry" (*R*. 493b3). The fact that the Athenian uses the same language for a free man in the doctor analogy as Socrates uses in the beast passage may imply a less rational approach to the double method of the preludes than some scholars, like Bobonich (1991, 2002), have argued.

There are, then, two basic elements of the Magnesian law code: the law itself, which also includes the potential punishment, and the prelude to the law. The former can be compared to the doctor's prescription and the latter to the explanation of the prescription and an attempt at gaining consent from the patient. The Athenian presents this double method as a new development in the realm of legislation, claiming that no legislator has ever used such a method, despite always having the opportunity (722b).[116]

In *Plato's Utopia Recast* (2002), Christopher Bobonich argues that the preludes aim to do more than simply gain compliance from the citizens, but to *rationally* persuade them to comply with the laws. On this view, the preludes are fundamentally informational, not coercive or emotional, and appeal to reason. This rational persuasion results in knowledge, which allows the citizens to become virtuous. For support for this position, Bobonich mostly relies on two main pieces of evidence: (i) the doctor analogy, which claims that free people must be persuaded to follow doctors' orders, as opposed to slaves who may simply be given orders and are expected to follow them, and (ii) the description provided by the Athenian of what the preludes do, which tends to use the language of teaching and learning. This evidence leads Bobonich to conclude that the preludes, even when engaging in mythmaking, are ultimately attempts at rational persuasion and creating knowledge. Based on the distinction between types of persuasion in chapter 2, the attempt to persuade with the aim of producing knowledge constitutes teaching. But does what the preludes produce in the citizens of Magnesia meet Plato's high bar for knowledge?

Bobonich argues that the reliance on rational persuasion in the preludes to the laws shows an optimistic turn in Plato's political philosophy. By 'rational persuasion', Bobonich means the

[116] While it still seems unusual for a law to have a set of persuasive or justificatory claims attached to it, we often see something like the preludes in the context of proposing new policy, amendments to old policy, or changes in the focus of some aspect of an organization. The "whereas" clauses in a policy proposal often have this persuasive and justificatory tone and purpose.

attempt "to influence the citizens' beliefs through appealing to rational considerations," or persuasion which is "not intended to inculcate false but useful beliefs or to effect persuasion through non-rational means" (p. 104). A "rational consideration," for Bobonich, is any consideration or evaluation of "what goods are to be pursued, why they are to be pursued, and of the relations among these goods" (p. 104). The preludes, then, on Bobonich's view, encourage citizens to actively evaluate the laws using their own reason, rather than to passively accept doctrine. While Bobonich correctly points out that there is a variety of types of preludes with varying degrees of complexity to their arguments, including the use of fear of punishment (p. 113), he seems to believe that persuasion based on praise and blame is too simplistic a tactic for Plato to have used (p. 111).[117]

In contrast to Bobonich, R.F. Stalley (1994) argues that the preludes do not give the citizens much room to exercise independent thought or critique, and that they can therefore be understood as more coercive than informative. Even though the Athenian clearly aims to orient all aspects of Magnesia toward cultivating virtue in the citizens, this does not seem to require rational argument, on his view. The laws in Magnesia are a source of correct opinion and are justified by the preludes. When the citizens follow the law, Stalley argues, "they will be acting in accordance with reason, but they do not need any rational insight of their own into the source of the law" (p. 166). Much of the correct opinion of the laws is not expressed in rational argument, but instead in the wisdom of the older citizens. In arguing in this way, Stalley aligns himself with Morrow (1953), who argues that falsehoods are not used as a tool for persuasion in the *Laws*, but

[117] Bobonich describes opposing views that interpret the preludes as using non-rational persuasion, including emotional appeals to praise and blame, for instance, as "far more pessimistic" and "far more depressing" (p. 109). This is largely in reference to those views put forward by Laks (1991) and Stalley (1994). The view that Plato's intent as an author is to put forward an optimistic or less depressing political theory at this late stage in his career, which demands moral knowledge among the average citizenry rather than true belief alone, seems itself a bit too optimistic. Without access to Plato's intent to confirm or deny this view, however, I will pass over it.

points to the Athenian's reference to "charms" or "enchantments" (*epōdai*)[118] as evidence that Plato's sense of persuasion relies on a "high level of rational insight suffused with emotion" (p. 242).

Occupying the middle ground, Julia Annas (2017) argues that the preludes rely on both rational and non-rational means of persuasion, depending on the context.[119] The preludes tend to rely on non-rational persuasion when the law concerns sex, violence, or religion. This is the context, Annas argues, in which the "charms" most prominently come into play. The "strikingly" non-rational preludes include reference to the souls of murder victims roaming the earth to seek revenge, encouragement for citizens to marry according to suitable personalities rather than money, and discouragement of homosexual sex as unnatural without justification (p. 95-96). Preludes which seem to have nothing to do with matters of great moral importance also do not provide much appeal to reason. For instance, the prelude to hunting laws simply asserts hunting and fishing with traps is lazy (as opposed to efficient) and should therefore not be done (823e-824b). However, from these examples of non-rational persuasion, it does not follow that all preludes primarily rely on non-rational persuasion. Annas ultimately takes the middle way between Bobonich and Stalley, arguing that the preludes sometimes involve philosophical argument and sometimes appeal to non-rational forces. But mostly, she claims, they are discursive statements, not unlike a sermon on the subject matter of the law (p. 96).

In what follows, I will argue that Bobonich over-interprets the teaching and learning language used by the Athenian. He takes the Athenian's claims about the laws teaching, and the

[118] This word, *epōde*, appears a few times in Plato's corpus, generally with a sense of mysterious powers to control or cure others. See, for example: *Euthydemus* 289e-290a, *Charmides* 155e-157c. More on the use of charms in the *Laws* later in this section.

[119] In *Virtue and Law in Plato and Beyond* (2017), Annas refers to the preludes as "preambles". This is an entirely acceptable translation of the Greek word *prooimia*, which I translate as "prelude". I change her language here for simplicity and continuity.

plausible demands of the imagined citizens to be taught, as evidence that the Magnesian legislation appeals strictly to reason. I align myself with Annas and Stalley, who both insist on examining what the preludes actually involve in practice, rather than what the Athenian claims they involve.

Bobonich relies on the doctor analogy of book 4 to draw a sharp distinction between teaching and persuading in the *Laws*. The description of the patient being a free man indicates not only that he should be persuaded to accept the doctor's diagnosis and prescription, on Bobonich's view, but also that the persuasion must be rational. There are two main differences between the two types of doctors (and, by analogy, two types of legislators) in the *Laws*: the knowledge they themselves have, and the reasoning they provide to their patients. Bobonich seems to gloss over the fact that the contrast in the doctor analogy is not between the use of rational and non-rational persuasion, or between producing knowledge and producing mere belief, but between the use of persuasion of *any* kind and simply issuing commands.

One of Bobonich's main pieces of textual evidence for his rational persuasion thesis is the Athenian's frequent use of teaching and learning language throughout the *Laws*, especially regarding the use of persuasion in the preludes.[120] The passages mainly come from books 4, 9, and 10, and refer directly to the preludes and the doctor analogy. The central claim is that what the lawgivers actually do is teach and bring about learning in the citizens (*Laws* 718c–d, 720d, 723a, 857d–e, and 888a) (p. 104).[121] The passages at 720d and 723a are part of the doctor

[120] It is uncontroversial that the aim of legislation in the *Laws* is to develop virtue (See, for example: 630d-631d, 705d-706a). Bobonich believes that this will necessarily mean developing moral knowledge. I believe the ultimate aim is for the citizens to act *in accordance with* virtue, which would only require holding correct beliefs about values, not knowledge. As Annas argues, the laws become unnecessary for those who become virtuous and embody the values and attitudes the laws aim to uphold, but remain in place for those who do not (2017, p. 105).

[121] This is the second of Bobonich's five claims to back up his position. The further claims include: (1) that the audience being persuaded is asking to be taught (*Laws* 885D–E), (3) the preludes are meant to be rationally persuasive, (4) the preludes are meant to give general ethical instruction, and (5) that it is ethically appropriate for free people to attempt rational persuasion rather than non-rational. The first point, that the audience is asking to be

analogy itself, which has already been discussed.[122] I will examine the other passages more thoroughly.

The passage that Bobonich points to at 718c-d highlights the distinction between teaching virtue and gaining acceptance of the laws as good. Since the laws are written to reflect virtue and to encourage virtuous behavior, Bobonich understands the role of the preludes and the laws as teaching virtue to the citizens, which would require producing knowledge of virtue. However, the passage at 718c-d makes no such claim. Instead, the Athenian claims that "the laws' method will be partly persuasion (*peithousa*) and partly (when they have to deal with characters that defy persuasion) compulsion and chastisement" (718b1-3). Further, the legislator, on the Athenian's view, does not aim to "teach" or "bring about learning" in this passage, as Bobonich claims. Instead, the Athenian wishes for the citizens to become "supremely easy to persuade along the paths of virtue (*pros aretēn*); and clearly this is the effect the legislator will try to achieve throughout his legislation" (718c11-13). Here, the aim of the legislator in drafting the preludes seems to be to produce neither knowledge nor virtue in the citizens directly, but rather to make the citizens easily persuadable *toward* virtue. Further, the double method aims to "help to make people more amenable and better disposed (*eumenesteron*) to listen to what the lawgiver recommends" (718d3-5). The lawgiver, the Athenian explains, will be pleased if the citizens become "easier to handle (*eumenesteron*), and so that much easier to teach (*eumathesteron*)" (718d6). Bobonich concentrates solely on the "teaching" word in this passage but overlooks the

taught, seems to have little necessary connection with what actually happens to them. The passages cited in support of the second point, however, are of particular interest.

[122] The teaching language in the doctor analogy refers to the doctor learning from the patient about their particular ailment. This seems to reverse the direction of teaching and learning from what Bobonich wants to claim — that the doctor teaches the patient.

explicit claim that the good legislator aims for the preludes to soothe the audience into accepting the laws as good and worth following.

At 857d, the Athenian uses the word *paideueis*, an education word often associated with child rearing. Here, the Athenian imagines what the slave doctor, who only knows and practices medicine through experience, would say when they see the free doctor practicing their double method of persuasion and prescription. The Athenian thinks the slave doctor would not understand the double method and would ridicule the free doctor for trying to 'tutor' (*paideueis*) the patient in medicine, rather than simply treating their ailments. The Athenian agrees with this characterization of the free doctor's double method, and even says that the legislator also tutors the citizens when they legislate by the double method. However, he does not think this is ridiculous, as the slave doctor does, but again sees it as necessary for broad compliance with the laws.

This initially seems to provide fairly strong evidence for understanding the preludes as helping to produce knowledge in the citizens, in order to make them truly virtuous. However, the goal of the doctor, I contend, is not to teach the patient about medicine, but rather to persuade them to act in accordance with his knowledge of medicine — making them healthy even without attaining the medical craft.[123] This goal seems much more in line with the artful rhetoric of the *Phaedrus* or the moral education through simplified stories explored in the early books of the *Republic*. The focus of the passage at 857d seems not to be that the free doctor makes a doctor

[123] Aristotle makes a similar point in *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.12 concerning the practical necessity of the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom. Here, Aristotle argues that just as it is possible for the average person to live in accordance with health without having knowledge of the medical craft, it is possible for someone to act in accordance with virtue without having the intellectual virtue of practical wisdom. It seems to make no practical difference, he argues, if an individual has practical wisdom or obeys others who have it. This idea of following the wisdom of someone else is also reflected in the *Republic* 9, when Socrates suggests that people should be ruled by their own reason whenever possible, but should be placed under someone more knowledgeable whenever necessary (590c-d).

out of each patient. Rather, it is the Athenian's point that, to the less knowledgeable onlooker, it only *seems* that way.[124] It is true that the Athenian agrees that the free doctor 'tutors' the patient, and that the legislator does the same through the double method of preludes and laws. However, it is not at all clear that the result of this "tutoring" is anything like knowledge of medicine, or analogously, knowledge of legislation or virtue. Much like the artful rhetoric of the *Phaedrus*, the result, or intended result, is not that the audience gains knowledge, but rather that the audience comes to hold true beliefs about virtue and acts in accordance with them.

The word *didaskei* also appears at 888a, where the Athenian considers how to approach the doubts of atheists and agnostics in order to 'teach' them the basic facts about the gods. In this passage, the use of *didaskei* does seem to indicate 'teaching' in the strict sense outlined in the *Gorgias* section in chapter 2. This is because the main point of this passage seems to be to highlight the importance of achieving the tone necessary for such difficult conversations to be fruitful. That is, rather than using harsh language against the atheist, which would only make them angrier and cause them to further dig in their heels, it is better to use softer language and tone to keep them calm and receptive to the message. In this way, the passage seems much less concerned with teaching or cultivating knowledge in the strict sense, and much more concerned with navigating the emotions of possible dissenters. There seems to be little question of the truth of the existence of the gods, the speaker's knowledge of the gods, or the possibility of the atheist

[124] In the *Gorgias* the famous sophist claims to use rhetoric to convince patients to follow doctor's orders with more success than the doctor can. The goal there is not to teach the patient medicine. In fact, Gorgias cannot teach them medicine. The goal is to get them to follow the prescription. This dynamic makes three points: (1) the true doctor may not always be able to convince patients to do what is best for themselves, (2) it is not necessary to have knowledge in order to convince someone to act in their best interests, and (3) one need not necessarily gain knowledge in order to be convinced to act in one's own best interest. The problem in the Gorgias is not that it is impossible for the persuasive speaker to foster true beliefs, but that they need not know what they are talking about in order to achieve it.

to accept that truth in this passage.[125] Instead, the focus is on the ability of the 'teacher' to remain calm and keep the atheist calm with carefully chosen words and tone. 'Teaching' (*didaskei*) here seems to require an emotional appeal, then, at least in the context of dealing with particularly contentious subjects, and is clearly not limited to rational argument alone.

This passage at 888a is followed by the Athenian emphasizing the need to use less-than-rational strategies for persuasion against a stubborn atheist in book 10. He claims that, even after forcing an atheist to admit he is wrong through argumentation, it is still necessary to "find a form of words to *charm* (*epōdon*) him into agreement" (903b). The Athenian prefaces the charm by saying that they should "persuade" (*peithōmen*) the young man to believe a collection of ideas about the gods, the nature of the universe and the place for human beings in it. He does not claim here that they must teach him.[126] This passage, of course, is not a prelude, but it does show willingness to use less-than-rational means to achieve a state of mind in the citizens, either through forming good habits of behavior or persuasive charms. It also leads directly into an extended prelude concerning religious laws. This is one of the preludes which Annas argues "strikingly" relies upon threats of severe punishment, public shame, and even death, for the rejection of religious orthodoxy (908e-909d).

[125] The punishment for atheism, in connection to this section, also highlights a lack of concern for reason or rational argument in the *Laws*. The rejection of religious orthodoxy despite the arguments or stories concerning the existence of the gods is considered a disease (900b), and people who are convicted of rejecting religious orthodoxies are imprisoned, and if they do not change their mind, put to death and their body discarded out of the country without burial (908e-909d). The unwillingness of the state to hear the arguments of the atheist seems to go against appeal to reason, while depriving the consistent atheist of burial rights appeals to the emotion of members of a shame/honor society.

[126] The Athenian does not say that what they should convince people about regarding the gods and the nature of the universe are actually false but nonetheless useful ideas, which distinguishes this notion of charming from the noble lie of the *Republic*. However, the Athenian does not say here what they will actually say to persuade the atheist of these ideas. Similarly, Socrates in the *Republic* does not seem to believe that a strictly distinct class system is not actually important for the stability of the state, or that the citizens should not actually regard one another as siblings (in a certain sense). He only believes that the particular claims they make in order to foster these beliefs in people's souls are not literally true. Both Socrates and the Athenian, then, seem to be concerned with fostering values in the citizenry of their prospective states which are genuinely beneficial. Whether the particular claims which result in these values are literally true or not is a separate question.

Although the Athenian sometimes uses the language of teaching and learning in the text, it is doubtful that the preludes themselves actually, in all cases, aim to teach in the sense Socrates lays out in the *Gorgias* and other dialogues. A more speculative consideration of the text can be offered in favor of this conclusion. It can be easy as a reader to lose sight of the fact that Plato has written a dialogue in which characters may have their own particular motivations for what they say.[127] For instance, there is a plausible interpretation to be made that, since the use of preludes is a new technique for legislation, the Athenian is attempting to persuade his interlocutors of the benefits of using preludes. It may very well be that the Athenian uses the language of teaching and learning in order to keep his interlocutors' conviction that the use of preludes is the right course of action. It would likely be difficult to keep their agreement with the proposed program if the preludes were described as only more or less true but primarily persuasive, or if he admitted flat out, as Annas argues, that some of the preludes are "strikingly" non-rational. This is, of course, a speculative interpretation, but one which takes into account the context of the characters in the dialogue, rather than focusing on the specific language they use.

I have so far argued against the position that the preludes to the laws appeal strictly to reason and aim to produce knowledge in the citizens. However, the Athenian also aims to shape the moral dispositions of the citizens from early childhood, for instance through legislation about nursing infants (788d-792e) and cultural education for young children (796e-798e). This habituation and early moral education is certainly achieved without rational persuasion or reasoned arguments. I will argue that the program for early childhood moral education in

[127] Bobonich claims that the Athenian insists each citizen of Magnesia should read the entirety of the *Laws*. "First, he [the Athenian] claims that the preceding books of the *Laws* constitute a general prelude to the legal code of Magnesia and he later requires that the entire *Laws* be read by all the citizens" (p. 99). Bobnich is likely referencing passages like 811c-e, where the Athenian suggests that the Guardians of the Laws in charge of education should encourage the teachers of children to teach anything that shows "a family resemblance to our discussion today" (811e3). However, unless there is an unacknowledged secretary taking minutes throughout the dialogue, this idea of reading the *Laws* itself seems to confuse Plato's written work for the conversation among his characters.

Magnesia is necessary for persuading the citizens to act in accordance with virtue. The use of non-rational means of persuasion, including stories, music, play, and possibly even lies to create the correct associations of pleasure and pain with virtue and vice, is essential to the early moral education program. The early moral education, then, is essential to the persuasive power of the preludes, and hence to compliance with the laws.

David Lay Williams (2013) correctly points out that there is a noticeable lack of scholarship on the subject of lying in the *Laws*.[128] Williams contends that, since the noble lie of the *Republic* relies on the availability of infallible rulers, and the *Laws* makes no such assumption – and, in fact, places great weight on checks and balances for accountability in the institutional design of the state – there is virtually no room for anything like the noble lie in Magnesia. It is true that the *Laws* does not provide anything like a philosophy of lying in the way the *Republic* does when it discusses different types of lies and provides qualifications for acceptable and unacceptable lying. However, as I argued in the previous section, the noble lie does not aim to simply instill false content as literal beliefs in the minds of the citizens of Kallipolis, but rather aims to instill cultural values as serious moral dispositions and true beliefs which uphold social harmony. I argue here that the same goal of instilling values in the citizens is fundamental to the persuasive power of the preludes, and hence to compliance with the laws and to the overall success of the state.

There are some mentions of lying in the *Laws*, which Williams points out, but only to condemn the practice. These include swearing false oaths, lying to superiors, and the lying that tends to come with bargaining in the marketplace. All instances of lying in these contexts come with serious punishments, just as they would in Kallipolis. But there is one exceptional case of

[128] What tends to be the case, he claims, is that the *Laws* is merely referenced in relation to the *Republic*, rather than the main subject of examination (p. 376, n. 72).

acceptable lying in the *Laws*, which Williams argues against interpreting as an endorsement of the practice, but which I argue is essential to the proper functioning of Magnesia.

The Athenian announces early on, in book 2, that the educators should not avoid teaching something to the youth simply because it is untrue.[129] Notably, the Athenian argues that the children of Magnesia should be taught that there is a link between justice and happiness, whether it is true or not, because of the social benefits such a belief would provide (663d-e). The Athenian defends this position by posing the following rhetorical question: "Could [the lawgiver] have told a more useful lie (*pseudos lusitelesteron*) than this, or one more effective (*dunamenon*) in making everyone practice justice in everything they do, willingly and without pressure (*mē bia*)?" (663d9-e2). This question indicates the aim of convincing young citizens to hold socially beneficial beliefs about virtue to relieve the need to use force. The language here aligns with the rationale of the noble lie and of the early moral education of the *Republic*. However, there are also some important differences.[130] The focus here in the *Laws* is on the usefulness of the falsehood, indicated by the words *lusitelesteron* and *dunamenon*, as opposed to the emphasis on the nobility (*gennaion*) of the falsehood in the *Republic*. Although the focus is explicitly on the usefulness and effectiveness of the falsehood itself, the effect is to instill an association between pleasure and virtue. That is, the utility of the lie would not simply be a matter of convenience in the operation of the state but would motivate the citizens to act in accordance with virtue — which would benefit them as well as the city overall.

[129] Although later, in book 5, the Athenian makes clear that "Truth heads the list of all things good" (730c1), he quickly qualifies this claim by saying that "anyone who is happy to go on producing falsehoods in *ignorance* of the truth is an idiot" (730c5-6, emphasis in original). This is not unlike the seemingly paradoxical position of the guardians in the *Republic* that they love truth and hate falsity but also perpetuate the noble lie. The ignorance of the liar here (*akousion* - unwillingly, involuntarily; *anous* - without understanding) may also reflect the distinction between lies in words and lies in the soul of the *Republic*.

[130] Schofield (2007) compares this use of lying to the noble lie of the *Republic*, insofar as both are essentially an educational tool aimed particularly at instilling cultural values in the youth.

Williams argues that this potential lie in the *Laws* should not be compared to the noble lie of the *Republic* for a number of reasons. First, he argues that the content is not obviously false — in fact, the Athenian argues that there really *is* a link between justice and happiness, before admitting that the message should be taught even if it weren't true. However, that fact bears little weight on the endorsement of teaching the same content if it *were* false. If anything, this passage shows that the truth of the content is less important than the motivation for virtuous action the belief would provide. Williams' other objections rest on the lack of infallible rulers in the *Laws* with the authority to lie, and the generally more democratic spirit of Magnesia's government institutions. These objections, however, rely on the principle that a political hierarchy is what determines the authority to lie. This principle is not present in the *Laws*, but it is not present in the *Republic* either. The principle in the *Republic* is epistemic, not political. The authority to lie is determined by one's knowledge and virtue, not by one's political position. Importantly, it is the virtuous elders of Magnesia who approve the moral curriculum that may or may not contain literal falsehoods.[131]

Finally, Williams acknowledges that the noble lie may be reasonably interpreted as a myth aimed chiefly at children in order to cultivate cultural values. However, he argues, the fact that the *Republic* also relies on other, non-mythological lies for the state to properly function, whereas the *Laws* requires no such lies for the practical mechanisms of government to properly function, suggests that there is a different approach to governance altogether, one which avoids deception in favor of truth. In what follows, I respond to this argument by Williams by showing

[131] The Officer of Education must be at least 50 years old and have legitimate children, preferably both sons and daughters (765d-766b). They approve the curriculum (801c-802c), approve plays for the entire public (936a-b), and meet with ambassadors who have traveled abroad (951d-952b). The officer of Education is also a member of the Nocturnal Council, whose membership is described as knowing which laws and people are good and bad (962b6-9), knowing about the fine and the good (966a5-d3), and understanding the connection between music, morality and laws (967d4-968a).

how the early moral education of Magnesia is essential for the practical mechanisms of government in Magnesia to properly function.

The Athenian gives the following definition of education (*paideian*): "the initial acquisition of virtue by the child, when the feelings of pleasure and affection, pain and hatred, that well up in his soul are channeled in the right courses before he can understand the reason why" (653a-c). This definition raises problems for the usual understanding of Platonic education. Namely, it seems to assume that education results, not in knowledge of the subject matter, but only in channeling feelings and desires toward the correct sorts of pursuits. This definition is predicated on the inability of the learners as children to understand "why" the correct objects of pleasure and pain are correct. This further indicates an explicit divide between (i) persuading people to desire to act in accordance with virtue and (ii) producing virtue in them. It is possible that the citizens will eventually come to understand the "why" as they develop reasoning capacity, but moral education here is concerned with cultivating "correct formation of our feelings of pleasure and pain" (653c1), not with cultivating understanding. Virtue, on the other hand, is the concord of reason and emotion (653b6), not correct orientation of emotion alone.

Just before the mention of the permissible lie, the Athenian emphasizes the importance of childhood education for compliance with the laws. In fact, early moral education seems to be necessary for effective legislation. This is because education is the act of "leading children to accept right principles as enunciated by the law and endorsed as genuinely correct by men who have high moral standards and are full of years and experience" (659d3-4).[132] The Athenian insists on cultural education for children, which includes stories and songs depicting "men who

[132] This is Saunders' translation (1956), as it appears in Cooper's *Collected Works of Plato*. The Greek here to describe those who endorse the moral curriculum is "τοῖς ἐπιεικεστάτοις καὶ πρεσβυτάτοις" which may be translated as "the most reasonable and oldest men". Getting the desires of the youth in line with the desires of the eldest citizens seems to be a major piece of moral education.

are moderate, courageous and good in every way" in order to cultivate these correct dispositions in the children (660a7).[133] What they call "songs" (*ōdas*), the Athenian claims, are actually "charms" (*epōdai*) meant to persuade or lead them to correctly value virtuous actions and to associate virtue with happiness (659e1). Without these early efforts to persuade children to associate pleasure and pain with the right things, as endorsed by the virtuous elders, it would be difficult to gain their compliance with the laws as adults.

In the later discussion of legislation about nursing infants, in book 7 (788d-792e), the Athenian is very clear that the first three years of a child's life (and even its time developing in the womb) are extremely important for developing not only physically, but also morally. He aims to prevent moral failings like cowardice and bad temperament in adults by assessing the characteristic tendencies of infants and attempting to counteract their development (791a-792c). This early moral habituation includes how and what an infant is fed, how its caretakers respond to its cries, and keeping it from experiencing too much pleasure or pain. Developing moral character from these early stages *en masse* reinforces what the Athenian calls "unwritten custom" and "ancestral law" (793b1-2) – that is, this earliest point of character development helps to establish a shared sense of morality and orthodox behavior in the minds of the young future citizens.[134] After the first three years of habituation, the Athenian claims that in years 4-7 "a child's character will need to be formed while he plays" (793e3). This will include both physical and cultural training in music, dance, and literature (which was touched on earlier in book 2). This discussion of cultural education (796e-798e) focuses more on the regulation of children's games and styles of play, with the aim of instilling common enjoyment in the same things, as a

[133] This restricted selection of stories for early moral education recalls the strict literary censorship of Kallipolis in books 2 and 3 of the *Republic*.
[134] Annas calls these ancestral laws the "informal system of praise and blame" in Magnesia (2017, p. 102).

forerunner to social solidarity in later life and preventing unwieldy developments in music as a way of preventing the representation of bad character in wild rhythms.[135] This early moral education program works to instill associations between virtue and vice with pleasure and pain.

All these early childhood regulations aim at developing the moral character of citizens and their dispositions toward certain types of actions. The legal code then aims to reflect these already instilled attitudes.[136] As the Athenian explains in book 5, regarding the development of moral character, "it's not the influence of law that we're concerned with now, but the educational effect of praise and blame, which makes the individual easier to handle and better disposed towards the laws that are to be established" (730b5-8). The laws aim to reflect the virtues instilled in early moral education. Law-abiding actions are to reflect virtuous actions, while breaking the law reflects vicious actions. The associations with praise and blame continue in the legal system though honor and punishment. The preludes aim to justify the laws by referring to the same moral principles they have learned from infancy. So, this early, non-rational persuasion of children to value virtue works hand-in-hand with legislation for adults, and with the preludes that justify the laws. In this way, Bobonich is right that the preludes appeal to rational considerations, insofar as they appeal to "what goods are to be pursued, why they are to be pursued, and of the relations among these goods" (p. 104). What is considered good, however, is systematically cultivated in the citizens from infancy by non-rational means.

The prelude to the entire law code in book 5 encourages the citizens to understand themselves as primarily a soul, and therefore to be primarily concerned with the well-being of

[135] Dance is also strictly regulated in order to cultivate good character (814e-816d).
[136] It seems that children are not the only ones subject to artistic restrictions. Moderation is non-rationally cultivated in young adults through regulated exposure to wine in the form of adult chaperoned drinking parties (671a-674c). Further, poets from outside of Magnesia must have their work approved by the authorities before they are allowed to perform in public (817b-817d), which would seem to affect Magnesians of all ages.

their soul, rather than their body, wealth, etc. (726a-729a). This general prelude reflects not only the goal of moral education to value virtue, but also encourages a particular type of self-awareness. This is a very similar kind of self-awareness to that highlighted in the *Alcibiades* (130c1-3), an awareness of the true self as the soul to which the body belongs.[137] This further reflects the distinction in *Laws* book 1 between divine and human goods, the divine (the virtues) being the more important, the cultivation of which should be the aim of the state (*L*. 631b-632d). Importantly, the general prelude does not *argue* for the soul's position of importance. Rather, the soul's primacy is merely stated as a primary premise and the prelude then expounds on how to correctly honor and care for the soul. This understanding of the soul and its importance may be considered, then, a rational consideration, given the beliefs the citizenry has been taught from childhood, but the prelude is not an instance of rational persuasion, since there is a lack of argument for this understanding of the value of the soul.

The main function of the preludes of the *Laws* is to put the citizens in a more accepting state of mind toward the laws themselves. They aim to accomplish this by showing that the laws are founded on just principles — the same moral principles they have been taught in early childhood — and therefore should be followed. For instance, the law establishing that men should be married between the ages of 30 and 35 is justified by a prelude stating, in part, that "Mankind is immortal because it always leaves later generations behind to preserve its unity and identity for all time: it gets its share of immortality by means of procreation" (721c4-7). This relies on the importance expressed in the general prelude of caring for one's own soul, mentioned above, as well as the importance of properly caring for and honoring one's children and parents

[137] I argue in chapter 1 that this level of self-awareness is essential to the proper care of the self throughout the Socratic dialogues, especially the *Apology*.

(729a-e). These are cultural values instilled in the citizens from birth, which the preludes then appeal to in order to justify the laws and the punishments for breaking them.

Bobonich may object on the grounds that the legislators of Magnesia aim to actually instill virtue in the citizens and not merely to encourage them to act in accordance with virtue. As he claims in *Plato's Utopia Recast*, "the laws of a just city must aim at inculcating all the virtues in the entire citizen body," and this is the goal of the laws of Magnesia (p. 89). This means that the citizens of Magnesia would need not only to act in accordance with the legislation, but also to understand and understand *why* the laws are the way they are, how they relate to the nature of the good, and what virtue itself is.[138] By analogy, in order to get a patient to health, a doctor would have to teach them the medical craft, rather than persuade them to act in accordance with principles of health. This persuasion to follow the prescription is much easier, of course, with an agreed-upon conception of health consistently reinforced from childhood.

Again, it is true that the Athenian sometimes describes the preludes as teaching or tutoring the citizens, but it is more important to examine how the preludes actually achieve their function of gaining acceptance of the laws. The preludes do not, for instance, tend to define terms, provide reasoned accounts for legal or moral concepts, or provide instructions for tasks. They instead provide justification for the laws, which relies on principles non-rationally instilled in the citizens from early childhood. Bobonich argues that since the language of teaching and learning is used to describe the preludes, this must be what they actually do. However, achieving a general agreement to behave in a prosocial way, or providing reasons for why the laws should be followed, does not necessarily rely on appealing to reason or fostering knowledge.

[138] In fact, there is only a small group of citizens who are described as having this sort of understanding of the laws, the good, and virtue. See: note 123.

As I argue in chapter 2, a major precondition of effective persuasion is knowing the souls of the audience. In Magnesia, the souls of the audience are deliberately shaped and cultivated from infancy by the very people who aim to persuade them as adults. We see the moral beliefs developed in the citizens of Magnesia in the cultural education approved by the morally upstanding elders. These moral beliefs are then reinforced by the laws, which are justified by the preludes. The preludes justify the laws by appealing to the beliefs and attitudes instilled in the citizens through early moral education and the social pressures of praise and blame.

Moral knowledge may be necessary for those elders who approve the moral curriculum, and may be developed in the adult citizens, but it is not clear that this is the role the preludes fulfill. We see this distinction between knowledge and correct belief emphasized in the *Meno* (98b-e). This *Meno* passage suggests that there is no *practical* difference between knowledge and correct belief. The example here is knowledge and correct belief regarding the road to Larissa. However, in the context of the dialogue, the main topic under discussion is virtue and whether it is teachable at all. If the lack of practical difference between true belief and knowledge introduced in the *Meno* holds true in the *Laws*, there may be good reason to believe that cultivating virtuous dispositions in the citizens may not require that each citizen has moral knowledge, but only that they act in accordance with virtue, in the same way that not all citizens of Kallipolis need to know the nature of the good itself in order to act virtuously. What is required, instead, is that all citizens have a shared set of moral beliefs and enough social self-awareness to stay within their area of specialization and to trust others in theirs.

3 Conclusion: Platonic Persuasion and Social Self-Awareness

In this chapter, I have argued that Plato relies on artful rhetoric as it is laid out in the *Phaedrus* for producing attitudes aligned with virtue in the imagined citizens and states of his political philosophy. By utilizing the notion of artful rhetoric, Plato can argue that political experts who know the good and the human soul have the authority to persuade or mislead their subjects, so long as the deceptions lead them toward acting in accordance with virtue. This is most notably exhibited in the *Republic*. We see a similar dynamic, to a lesser degree, in the *Laws*, notably in early moral education, which seems open to, but may not require, lying, and in the persuasive preludes baked into the law code, which appeal to the moral principles learned from early childhood. Ultimately, for Plato, persuasion is a tool which can easily be misused for bad ends, but which can also be used for the good ends of habituating proper beliefs and associations in the youth and persuading adult citizens to act in accordance with these beliefs. This good end does not require producing knowledge in the citizens, but only correct belief.

The noble lie in the *Republic* is Plato's attempt to describe genuinely beneficial, mass scale persuasion, rooted in the highest epistemic authority of human reason. It instills in the children of Kallipolis the idea of social unity and a belief that there is a proper, natural role for each citizen — an idea which remains in the minds of the adult citizens. The early moral education and the preludes of the *Laws* retain this idea of mass scale persuasion aimed at genuine social benefit. The early moral education of the *Laws* relies on the virtue of the elders, as does, therefore, the validity of the entire legal system. The moral education of Magnesia emphasizes an association of pleasure and pain with virtue and vice, which then feeds into the same association with legal and illegal actions. Both dialogues emphasize the education and habituation of young children as essential to the viability of the well-functioning state.

The main function of persuasive speech in both dialogues is to ensure that the citizens act in accordance with virtue, as the most virtuous members of the state have come to understand it and accept the state legislation as founded on just principles. In the *Republic*, acting in accordance with virtue entails staying in one's own proper class, as assigned by the state, and taking on whichever role that entails. In the *Laws*, acting in accordance with virtue entails following the laws, which reflect the just principles instilled in the citizens from childhood. In both texts, deference to the political authority is justified as deference to epistemic and moral authority. Deference to the philosopher-kings and queens, or to the written laws, requires at least enough epistemic self-awareness to avoid thinking that one knows better than the epistemic/moral authority. That the citizens in both cases defer to epistemic authority does not mean that the citizens have cultivated Socratic self-knowledge. However, Plato seems to be more concerned in these political works with achieving the practical and organizational results of widespread Socratic self-knowledge, as described in the *Charmides*, than he is with achieving the genuine psychological state in each citizen.

Achieving Socratic self-knowledge in the individual means having awareness of what one knows and does not know, and thereby coming into harmony with oneself and not acting on mistaken confidence. The same principle applied at the social level means coming into harmony with the rest of one's community and not taking on responsibilities better suited for others. The myth of the metals does not induce genuine Socratic self-knowledge in each individual citizen, but it does yield similar results. The myth of the metals is a lie about the nature of the human soul aimed at creating a shared set of true beliefs about what it is right for the citizens of Kallipolis to do. Similarly, the content of Socrates' account of the human soul in the *Phaedrus* is not the strict or complete truth, by his own admission. However, it is aimed at instilling a true

belief in Phaedrus about how to think of his soul. The result of this set of true beliefs in the *Republic* is the principle of specialization for individuals and justice between the classes. Much as a traveler needs only correct belief, not knowledge, about the road to Larissa in order to properly navigate there, the citizens do not need to achieve knowledge, but only correct belief, in order to reliably act in accordance with this social good.

The preludes to the laws in the *Laws* are a set of sometimes mythological, sometimes rational, sometimes emotional arguments aimed at getting the citizens of Magnesia to accept the laws as good and justified, and therefore worth following. The laws aim to make the citizens act in accordance with virtue and, of course, to maintain a stable and unified state. In order for the preludes to be maximally persuasive to the citizens of Magnesia, the citizens must have a shared set of beliefs about virtue and vice that are reflected in the laws. This is why the early moral education and habituation of infants, children, and adults is so important for the stability of the state. The result is a highly organized state in which citizens are encouraged to act in accordance with virtue and accept the laws as well-written by wise legislators and well-justified in accordance with moral principles. The citizens accept the laws because of their moral education and their trust in the epistemic/moral authority of the legislators.

In Chapter 1, I laid out the essential features of Socratic self-knowledge and argued that it is present not only in the earlier Socratic dialogues, but also in Plato's later works, where it features as a cornerstone of Platonic political philosophy. Chapter two described Plato's conception of artful rhetoric as a tool for knowledgeable speakers to persuade others to accept beliefs which align with the truth, without producing knowledge in the audience. In this chapter, I have argued that Plato ventures to employ artful rhetoric in the *Republic* and the *Laws* in order

to persuade the citizens to hold beliefs which encourage them to act in accordance with virtue. This persuasion results in a similarly organized state to the one described in the *Charmides*, with Socratic self-knowledge at its base, but does not produce genuine Socratic self-knowledge in the citizens.

The next and final chapter will argue that Socratic self-knowledge is not necessarily an anti-democratic value, as Plato seems to assume. I will show how the idea of Socratic self-knowledge can be utilized in modern democracies. Epistemic self-awareness can lead to social self-awareness in a way that is positive for democratic shared deliberation. Similarly, the principles of artful rhetoric can be useful for experts in any field to better understand their audience and to reach them more effectively and respectfully.

Chapter 4
The Possibility of Socratic Democracy

In his major political works, and sometimes more implicitly in his shorter moral dialogues, Plato heavily critiques the possibility of a well-functioning democracy. He instead insists on the epistemic elitist view of political power legitimized by expert knowledge. In the *Republic* especially, Plato proposes a strict socio-political hierarchy and a division of labor based on natural aptitude and expert knowledge, so that no one partakes in any activity for which they lack expertise — including politics. In chapter 1, I argued both that Socratic self-knowledge is essential to Plato's politics, and also that he understands this type of epistemic self-awareness as conflicting with democratic politics. This is because an awareness of what we know and do not know would result in us avoiding activities for which we lack knowledge. Since politics is a skill for Plato, much like medicine or navigation, anyone with the awareness that they do not have political expertise should naturally avoid participating in politics. Since democratic politics is based on widespread political participation and self-governance, democracy would seem to be in direct conflict with widespread Socratic self-knowledge.

In this chapter, I will argue that attaining Socratic self-knowledge need not deter the average citizen from participating in politics. Instead, the awareness of what one knows and does not know is beneficial for effective deliberation. As such, it could allow collective deliberation under democracy to function more efficiently and effectively. I will refer to a kind of deliberative democracy prefaced by a cultural value of epistemic self-awareness and non-expert shared deliberation as a "Socratic democracy." It is not my position that Plato or Socrates anywhere advance or defend this pro-democratic application of Socratic self-knowledge. I only aim to argue that Socratic self-knowledge can be applied to, and benefit, democratic politics.

In the first section, I will lay out Plato's main critiques of democracy. Here, I aim to show that Plato thinks of the problems of democracy as primarily epistemic and moral rather than technical or institutional. In general, Plato tends to focus his critique on the intellectual inability of the many to make good decisions because of their culture and values. This criticism of the possibility of a well-functioning democracy makes Plato radically anti-democratic, rather than a democratic reformer opposed merely to the state of democratic politics in his time.

In the second section, I will argue that, although Plato may have been anti-democratic, there is nothing inherently anti-democratic about the idea of Socratic self-knowledge. In fact, I will argue, a deliberative democracy could practically benefit from adopting Socratic self-knowledge as a widespread social value. Plato's political application of Socratic self-knowledge makes well-functioning democracy appear impossible. However, Socratic self-knowledge need not prohibit widespread political participation due to a lack of political knowledge. In fact, I will argue, a citizenry equipped with Socratic self-knowledge would enhance a deliberative democracy, not inhibit it.

1 Plato's Critique of Democracy

Democracy is generally considered to have two basic types of possible benefits: instrumental and non-instrumental. Instrumental benefits are practical and concern the outcomes of the democratic process while non-instrumental benefits are moral and tend to concern the legitimacy of both the processes and outcomes as well as the rights of the citizens. One kind of instrumental benefit is epistemic: the more people there are deliberating about a topic, the more likely it is that the group will come to the correct conclusion.[139] The non-instrumental benefits

[139] Aristotle makes a similar argument in *Politics* 3.11, and Condorcet proved it as a theorem of mathematical probability in his *Essay on the Application of Analysis to the Probability of Majority Decisions* (1785). Different

sometimes claimed for a democratic system include individual autonomy and legal equality. Democracy tends to entail a greater degree of personal liberty and equal treatment under the law than other forms of political organization, at least among citizens, a group which does not necessarily include the entire population. Plato, however, identifies these purported benefits of personal liberty and equality as the main problems with democracy: he denigrates the epistemic capacity of the majority of the people, and he opposes allowing all of the people equal access to political power. The main cause of concern about democracy in Plato's work is not the organization of the government or the system used to implement policy or legislation. The critical issue is who is making the decisions and what they value. In this section, I will clarify the main problems Plato sees in (i) democratic leadership, (ii) the citizen body, and (iii) the values he ascribes to democracy itself.

For Plato, democratic leadership seems to be based in little more than base populism. Populism of this kind is usually characterized by a disingenuous political actor seeking power by flattering the many common people and demonizing "the elite" and foreigners as culturally out of touch and morally corrupt.[140] This type of divisive rhetoric is generally effective for gaining popularity because there are far more non-elite citizens who will be motivated to support a politician who not only flatters and affirms them, but also directs their frustrations at another group. There is also a looser sense of populism which focuses more generally on the

forms of this theorem have been developed regarding the "wisdom of the crowd," however, they often focus on the accuracy of the average of a wide collection of estimates regarding something concrete like the number of jellybeans in a jar. It is much more difficult, and many would argue category mistake, to objectively assess the accuracy of political decisions.

[140] This definition of populism as a pejorative aligns with the conception of populism as popular resentment against the elite found in Shils (1956). The term 'populism' also has specific political meanings, which I do not mean to invoke here. 'Populism' may refer to a specific political party and movement in the United States in the late 19th century, which focused on efforts to economically empower the rural agrarian working class by expanding the currency from the gold-based system to include silver. It can also be used in a looser political sense to describe a general orientation which tends to combine economic progressivism and social conservatism. I do not address these positions here, but only use the term 'populist' and 'populism' to refer to a rhetorical technique rather than a political orientation. For a full discussion of the origins and development of populism, see Kaltwasser, Taggart, et al "Populism: An Overview of the Concept and the State of the Art", in *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (2017).

politician's pursuit of popularity. This sense of populism is also usually seen as disingenuous: rather than aiming to create excitement in a faction of the citizens by sowing division, the aim is simply to flatter any audience with whatever the speaker believes they would like to hear in the moment. This sort of populist rhetoric demands that the speakers adhere to no principle other than appeasing whomever they find themselves speaking to. Plato sees this aim to flatter the audience as a sign of lacking political knowledge. When one is guided by knowledge, they will not waver to appease an audience.

Perhaps the clearest description of democratic leaders relying on this latter sort of flattering rhetoric in Plato is found at the beginning of the Callicles section of the *Gorgias* (481b-482c). Here, Socrates identifies the relationship between the orator and the crowd with Callicles' relationship with his two fickle beloveds, the Athenian *demos* and Demos, son of Pyrilampes. Callicles must keep shifting his position in order to stay aligned with the *demos*, much as he does to keep favor with the fickle son of Pyrilampes. As Socrates explains: "If you say anything in the Assembly and the Athenian *demos* denies it, you shift your ground and say what it wants to hear." (482e1-4). The democratic leader, on this description, is in less a position of power than in a position to flatter those with power — the people. While it is possible to be a principled populist with a fairly clear and consistent message for the many, Callicles here is described as a completely unprincipled populist, taking up whatever position will win him favor in the moment.

This sort of unprincipled flattery of the *demos* is also present in the descriptions of democratic leadership in the *Republic*. At 493a-c, Socrates compares the sophist's style of teaching the many to someone "learning the passions and appetites of a huge, strong beast" (493a9). Over time, the sophist gets a handle on how the beast reacts to certain behaviors, words, and its emotional response to tones of voice. This, Socrates says, is how one learns a knack for satisfying appetites, but this ability has nothing to do with knowledge or genuine benefit.

Although familiar with the beast's reactions, the sophist has no knowledge of what is actually good or bad but calls whatever the beast likes "good" and whatever the beast dislikes "bad."

On this account, the sophist and orator focus solely on what appears best to the audience. However, according to Plato, what appears best to the many is determined primarily by appetitive desire, rather than knowledge or reason. In a political context where the many have the power, the orator simply needs to echo back to the audience what they already value, rather than persuade them to value something genuinely beneficial. This is at least partly because the orator does not know what is actually good. The sophist feigns knowledge and the ability and authority to teach by merely placating the beast's desires. The "Beast of the Many" passage shows Plato's understanding of democratic leadership as fundamentally affirming the base desires of the majority.[141]

While the more divisive and anti-elite style of populist rhetoric is not deeply examined in the *Gorgias* or *Republic*, divisive rhetoric is assumed to play a role in establishing both democracy and tyranny. The transition from oligarchy to democracy in *Republic* 8 portrays the motivations of the democratic revolution as class-based and anti-elite. The tipping point of the democratic uprising is reached when the many realise that the moneyed elite are far less prepared to fight in a battle against a foreign enemy (555d-557a). This is in the context of increased economic inequality under the oligarchic regime. However, the more divisive form of populist rhetoric is only explicitly mentioned in the shift from democracy to tyranny, which is marked by the rise of a charismatic leader of the people who is not ashamed to bring false charges against his political enemies and who makes promises about debt cancellation and redistribution of land from the few to the many (565e-566a).

[141] This is also made clear in multiple sections of the *Republic*. See, especially, the Ship of State passage (488a-e). The same theme appears again in *Phaedrus* with the added qualifier that the orator without knowledge of the good only attempts to affirm what seems just to the crowd (260a-d).

Josiah Ober (1989) argues that the most skilled and educated speakers of democratic Athens would often claim to have little skill in speaking (p. 174), and that, at times, they even claimed poverty (p. 221).[142] Portraying oneself in court as having an unremarkable education or as being of modest wealth is a tactic for the speaker to create an identity with the members of the jury, which, it is likely, would have been constituted by men of average means and education. It is unclear whether these claims were, or could be, taken to be literally true by the jury or assembly, but they must have had some rhetorical effect on the audience if the strategy was consistently utilized by different speech writers. Ober argues that, while some speeches seem to be specially crafted to create the appearance of an amateur speaker, none could reasonably be mistaken for the spontaneous speech of the averagely educated man.

Aristotle points out, in the *Athenian Constitution*, that Cleon was the first democratic leader in Athens to take appeal to the so-called average citizen to the point of offence.[143] He claims that Cleon was most destructive of the people by using abusive speech in the public forum and presenting himself in an unprofessional way (*AC* 28.3). Aristotle further claims that Cleon's popularity and the power he was able to wield had great effects on the Athenian democracy, stating that after Cleon, the leadership of the people was passed on repeatedly to whoever was most willing "to gratify the many with an eye to immediate popularity" (*AC* 28.4). Aristotle's understanding of flattering, divisive, and extreme rhetoric in this discussion aligns well with Plato's, and both philosophers see the use of flattery as morally and, therefore, politically destructive.

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[142] Ober argues that there was a popular mistrust of skilled rhetoric in ancient Athens, which prompted speech writers to accuse their opponents of being "slick speakers who are using their rhetorical abilities to evil ends" (p. 173). People who used rhetorical ability for personal gain in the court system were labeled sycophants and disparaged, somewhat like popular depictions of lawyers and politicians today.

[143] There is some disagreement about whether the *Athenian Constitution* was written by Aristotle himself. Rhodes, for example, argues in *The Athenian Constitution Written in the School of Aristotle* (2017) that there are sufficient stylistic differences and inconsistencies in the content compared with other Aristotelian works to cast doubt on the authorship. But it was almost certainly written by a member of Aristotle's school, the Lyceum. For my purposes, whether the *AC* was written by Aristotle himself bears no weight on the relevance of the passage.

As I have argued in chapter 1, while the *Apology* highlights the importance of Socratic self-knowledge for self-care — that is, caring for the truth, wisdom, and the best possible state of one's own soul (*Ap*. 29e3, 30a6-b2, 31b4-5, 36c4-d1) — the *Alcibiades* brings self-knowledge beyond the self into the political realm. There, Socrates is concerned that the young Alcibiades has such high political ambitions without the practical and moral knowledge required for just and effective political rule. But more importantly, Alcibiades does not even realize that he does not have that knowledge. Socrates seems to believe that self-knowledge, in the sense of knowing what kind of thing you are as a human being, is necessary for properly caring for oneself. Since the work of politicians, on Socrates' view, is to care for human beings, they too must have that same self-knowledge to properly care for their citizens. But, properly caring for yourself and others requires not only knowing that each human being is primarily a soul, on Plato's view, but also knowing whether you know how to properly care for souls.[144] A democratic leader focused on flattering the most people and stirring a crowd through exciting rhetoric does not care for the souls of the people.

I turn now from Plato's criticisms of democratic leaders to his criticisms of the general public in a democracy. While the leadership in a democracy may seem unprincipled to Plato, the people are not much better. Throughout the dialogues, Plato repeatedly dismisses the idea of many people doing anything well, including governance. In the *Apology*, Socrates compares moral education and corruption to horse training, insisting that "one individual is able to improve them, or very few, namely, the horse breeders, whereas the majority, if they have horses

[144] In the *Gorgias*, Socrates states that the *sophron* man, who has mastered his own soul, will be able to do what is fitting in all cases for human beings (507a8). The Guardians in the *Republic* must know The Good itself, as well as the other forms. Presumably, the form of human beings is among the forms known by the philosopher kings as well as what is good for humans. The *Phaedrus* similarly claims that the virtuous orator must know the human soul (271a-b).

and use them, corrupt them" (24c-25c). In the *Crito*, Socrates states that the many can do no great evil or good, but only act haphazardly (44d), that their praise and blame are not based in knowledge and therefore are not worth following (47b-e), and that they would sentence a man to death one day and bring him back to life the next if they could (48c).[145] These examples are not necessarily direct critiques of democracy, but such remarks do suggest that the majority are not well-suited to govern. The *Statesman* is a bit more straightforward. Immediately after establishing that the "criterion of correct government" entails that "the wise and good man will govern the interests of the ruled" (296e3-5), the Eleatic Stranger states that "a mass of any people whatsoever would never be able to acquire this sort of expert knowledge and so govern a city with intelligence" (297b9-10). In general, then, there is a clear pattern of distrust in the citizens' ability to take the business of government seriously and approach it with intelligence.

In many of Plato's Socratic dialogues, Socrates challenges a knowledge claim of his interlocutor and, once he has shown them to lack knowledge about the subject, encourages them to pursue the knowledge they mistakenly believed themselves to already have. An implicit goal of Socrates engaging the citizens in the elenchus seems to be to instill a kind of Socratic self-knowledge in each of them individually. Socrates notably prefers one-on-one conversations over communicating with a large group.[146] These individual conversions aim at producing not only an understanding of what each person knows and does not know, but also an understanding of where each person fits in their own society, in a broad sense. Since Socrates tends to consistently

[145] The same issue is highlighted in Gastil and Knoblock's *Hope for Democracy* (2020) regarding the Brexit vote: "On June 23, 2016, for example, 52 percent of voters in the United Kingdom opted to leave the European Union, a decision known as Brexit. A Daily Mail poll commissioned after the referendum, however, showed that more than a million people who voted to exit the union wished they could take it back. That amounts to 7 percent of the UK electorate." (p. 3).

[146] Aside from the multiple disparaging remarks Plato's Socrates makes about crowds, the many, assemblies, and mobs throughout the dialogues, Socrates claims in the *Gorgias* that he tends to only pay attention to a single interlocutor at a time and ignores the crowd (474a).

believe that knowledge is necessary to do things well, by uncovering what his interlocutors really know about the moral concepts they claim to understand, we can infer whether the interlocutor should be trusted to make important decisions by Socrates' epistemic standards. Since Alcibiades, for instance, cannot clearly define justice, or say when he learned about it or from whom, Socrates would be right to be skeptical of his preparedness for the political authority Alcibiades so desires.

This emphasis on epistemic self-awareness as an essential piece of legitimate political authority has already been explored in chapter 1. There, I argued that Socrates' dream society in the *Charmides* is focused on each citizen having a comprehensive understanding of their own knowledge and ignorance, which entails that they only engage in work that they know how to do and refrain from practices that they do not know how to do. This idea of a perfectly functioning society based on expert knowledge as the qualifying factor for pursuing an activity is reflected again in the division of labor and social classes in the *Republic* (2.369e-370a, 4.433a7-b1). [147] Moreover, the knowledge qualification for any pursuit seems implicitly present throughout the Socratic dialogues. The main premise of the perfectly functioning societies imagined in the *Charmides* and *Republic* is that, once each citizen knows what they know and don't know, they will willingly confine themselves to their area of expertise and will not meddle in others' occupations.[148]

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[147] *Charmides* and *Republic* refer to the same value with different words. The *Charmides* associates adhering to what you know and refraining from participating in things you do not know as moderation (*sōphrosunē*), while in the *Republic*, the same value is associated with justice (*dikaiosunē*). This inconsistency in terms does not change my understanding of the importance of the value itself for Plato's politics. The value of sticking to what you know and not meddling in what you don't know seems to be an essential political value for Plato, regardless of what it is called. What allows for the ability to recognize what we should stick to and what we should not meddle in is the awareness of what we know and don't know — Socratic self-knowledge.

[148] There is some tension here. On the one hand, Socrates often encourages his interlocutors to pursue the knowledge they have been proven to lack. On the other hand, the perfectly just (or moderate) societies of *Charmides* and *Republic* seem to rely, not on the pursuit of knowledge, but on confinement of one's activity around the knowledge which one already has. Based on the former encouragement to pursue knowledge, we may say that

On this account of Socrates' claims about the general citizenry in the ideal Platonic state, a citizen is able to understand their own function in their society by understanding what they know and do not know. Plato seems to think this entails the citizen staying out of politics. He therefore creates elaborate institutions to allow only the epistemic elite to have any real political power and expects the people to embrace the rule of experts. The epistemic virtue of Socratic self-knowledge is expanded in *Republic* 2 to the political virtue of the principle of specialization. By establishing that each citizen should only pursue the one occupation for which they are naturally best suited, Plato offers the pragmatic foundation for the efficiency of even the smallest community. The focus on natural ability and epistemic training for the efficiency of this division of labor implies the inefficiency and disorganization of a democratic constitution. This implication is made explicit in Book 8.

Plato's description of the people under democracy in book 8 of the *Republic* illustrates the pitfalls of a society that rejects expertise as an organizing principle. Democracy comes to be through a popular revolution of the poor, who then establish equality of political power for all (who are not killed or expelled) and assign duties and offices by lot. The freedom that comes along with this new organization allows for each citizen to arrange their life in whatever way pleases them. Widespread personal freedom seems beautiful and liberating, but Socrates sees it as fundamentally disorganized and disorienting, lamenting that "there is no requirement to rule, even if you're capable of it, or again to be ruled if you don't want to be, or to be at war when the

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Socrates implies the ability to gain political knowledge even if one has been proven to lack it, therefore allowing for at least the possibility of broadly participatory politics. On the latter suggestion, that knowledge is limited to a single craft, we may be led to think that even potential knowledge (or at least potential expert knowledge) is limited to only a single craft, which is implied throughout Plato's corpus. This tension may be relieved by at least three possibilities: first, by acknowledging the difference between expert and non-expert knowledge, allowing for the interlocutor to pursue better awareness of the topic without becoming an expert. Second, we may simply say that Socrates does not have any reason to believe his interlocutors have expert knowledge in anything after being refuted about their particular knowledge claim, so the possibility of being expert in two areas does not come up. And third, since the Socratic dialogues tend to focus on moral concepts, Socrates' encouragement to pursue knowledge of particular virtues or of virtue in general, it is possible that Socrates believes this pursuit is a worthy one even without the possibility or probability of ever achieving this knowledge.

others are, or at peace unless you happen to want it" (557e2-4).[149] This kind of personal liberty, on Plato's view, means the entire social structure becomes incoherent because of the assumed validity of each citizen's personal whims. There is no incentive for citizens to participate in politics, even if they are well suited for political responsibility. Indeed, there is no reason to do anything other than follow the moment-to-moment sentiment of the individual.

The democratic man is described in *Republic* 8 as fundamentally steered by his desires, both the necessary and unnecessary. Since he is not led by his reason, he is open both to following his own whim and the whims of others who wish to use him for their own gain. Since he does not value the development of his reasoning faculties, the democratic man is more open to accepting "false and boastful beliefs," primed to reject voices of reason, and lives in a state of inner conflict (560c-d). Without an organizing principle by which to live, the democratic man wanders through life directionless:

> "Sometimes he drinks heavily while listening to the flute; at other times, he drinks only water and is on a diet; sometimes he goes in for physical training; at other times, he's idle and neglects everything; and sometimes he even occupies himself with what he takes to be philosophy. He often engages in politics, leaping up from his seat and saying and doing whatever comes into his mind. If he happens to admire soldiers, he's carried in that direction, if money-makers, in that one. There's neither order nor necessity in his life, but he calls it pleasant, free, and blessedly happy, and he follows it for as long as he lives" (561c5-d7)

This description of the "democratic man" illustrates the nature of the democratic state. Similar to this description of the democratic man, without reason as an organizing principle for a democratic society, the only direction it has is the desires of the people, which can be destructive and easily manipulated. Like this man's life, the democratic state, on Plato's view, has no stable direction or a single organizing principle, which leaves it vulnerable to the powers of coercion. This lack of an organizing principle, along with a great deal of personal freedom

[149] This idea of leaving the responsibility to rule open to whim or personal interest may be seen as a counterpoint to the requirement or compulsion of the philosophers to rule in the *Republic* (7.520a4-d3).

and tolerance for a wide variety of lifestyles, the democratic state enables the demagogue who makes grad promises and claims to be the unifying voice of the people to rise and establish a tyranny.

I turn now to the third kind of criticism Plato offers of democracy: his criticism of the values he believes underlie it. While the people may leave much to be desired, for Plato, the values associated with democracy are perhaps what he finds most disturbing. Democracy, as Plato understands it, places great value on the individual (as opposed to the value of the whole in his ideal, completely unified society). The emphasis on the whim of the individual and the lack of necessity to rule for those well suited to do so is further emphasized by the lack of seriousness or care surrounding the punishment of criminals (558a) and the fact that the only qualification for being considered good in the public eye is to (appear to) wish the majority well (558b). Democratic values seem to produce not only poor governance but also an inevitable existential crisis for the entire society. Plato claims that democracy is so unstable as to only need "a small pretext [...] to fight with itself and is sometimes in a state of civil war even without any external influence" (556e3-8).

Plato's description of the democratic man reflects his understanding of the values most prized in the democratic society. These include personal liberty, freedom of speech, and tolerance of a great spectrum of lifestyles. At the individual level, Plato thinks, these values will result in a sort of self-indulgence, pursuing whichever interests happen to strike in the moment, leading to psychological incoherence and a lack of a steady direction in one's life. At the social level, there is no stable leadership in the democratic society, which means that political decisions will lack reasoned deliberation and long-term goals. The psychological state of the individual democrat seems to reflect the internal incoherence of the democratic society.[150] Plato

[150] There is significant disagreement in the scholarship over not only the nature of the democratic soul, but also the nature of the city-soul analogy and whether the analogy is a true one-to-one relationship. For instance, Lear (1992)

describes the democratic city as a city full of constitutions, where each citizen has their own personal constitution and only adheres to that as they please (557c-d). In both the democratic city and soul, reason is not at the helm and there is a lack of any stable governing principle to provide a consistent direction. This results in psychological dissonance in the democratic soul and social and political incoherence in the democratic city.

Ultimately, there is no sense of necessity under democracy as Plato understands it. No one is required to participate in politics, to care for themselves (in the Socratic psychological sense), to develop knowledge or reasoning abilities, or to take on responsibilities that they are best suited to undertake. The democratic values of personal liberty and equality, which Plato seems to take as the twin cornerstones of democracy, dissolve all personal and social responsibility. The mutual tolerance for potentially eccentric lifestyles and the understanding of political participation as a personal choice regardless of knowledge and ability is bolstered by these two democratic values.

Plato resolves the problem of the lack of social responsibility by recommending widespread Socratic self-knowledge. We see this in the *Charmides* in the form of Socrates' dream society, in which each citizen is able to understand their proper role in the social structure by understanding what they know and do not know. They only participate in activities which they understand and avoid activities they do not. Plato seems to think this entails the average citizen staying out of politics. He thus creates elaborate institutions in the *Republic* to allow only the epistemic elite to have any real political power. The political unity of Plato's ideal state,

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argues that the city-soul analogy is vague at best and mostly a strategic tool for Plato to reframe by recontextualizing a fundamentally repressive political system. Smith (1999) argues that the analogy is not entirely accurate, partly because the soul may have more than three parts. This objection may require an understanding of the nature of the soul, its relation to the city, as well as the nature of justice itself in the *Republic* that is not explicitly in the text. Most relevantly, Johnstone (2013) argues that while the democratic man in Book 8 clearly lacks a stable goal, he is not necessarily ruled by the appetitive desires alone but may be ruled by each part of the soul intermittently. This view is most straightforwardly supported by the fact that the democratic man is described by Socrates as sometimes attempting philosophy and politics when the mood strikes and may pursue the military if he happens to admire soldiers (*R*. 8.561d).

then, depends not only on a deeply shared social identity and set of values, but also on the citizens' ability to grasp the limits of their own knowledge. They must, in some important sense, know what they know and do not know. The state will achieve Socrates' dream only if the citizens have Socratic self-knowledge.

Plato presents Socratic self-knowledge as a sort of cure for any flawed constitution, but he is particularly interested in democracy. Decisions should be left to those who know, and knowing your own ignorance should prevent you from attempting to make important decisions about which you lack knowledge. In the next section, I argue, contra Plato, that Socratic self-knowledge may instead enhance efficient and effective deliberation, including collaborative, democratic deliberation.

2 Democratic Deliberation, Socratic Self-Knowledge, and Artful Rhetoric

So far, I have argued that Plato believed that the political outcome of widespread Socratic self-knowledge in a society would be that citizens stay out of politics completely if they are not political experts.[151] However, in a democracy, each citizen has a role to play as a political actor to pursue the common good through collective, good-faith deliberation.[152] As a result, Plato is an opponent of democracy. I argued in chapter 2 that Plato outlines a particular form of persuasive speech in the *Phaedrus*, which he calls artful rhetoric or virtuous persuasion. In

[151] That there could be widespread political participation with widespread Socratic self-knowledge is contrary to two parts of Plato's theory in the *Republic*. First, the description of democracy in book 8 implies that, with freedom as the highest value (*R*. 8.562b-563e), the citizens will be uninterested in political responsibility and will instead chase frivolous desires as they strike (8.562c5-d7). Second, and perhaps more importantly, the principle of specialization, which I have argued is an extension and application of Socratic self-knowledge, seems to bar citizens from being qualified to do more than one thing. Engaging in politics, then, would be a second specialty added to the particular craft each citizen already practices.

[152] There are different ways in which a democracy may require political deliberation by the average citizen. Most modern democracies are representative. This means that most of the deliberation about legislation and policy is done by elected officials. This relatively small group will deliberate together and, outside of special circumstances, the average citizen will only have to deliberate about who to vote for. In Plato's context of democratic Athens, however, the average citizen would discuss, deliberate over, and vote on policy directly. I will mostly be interested in this latter style of deliberative democracy in this section.

chapter 3, I argued that Plato relies on qualified practitioners of artful rhetoric in the *Republic* and *Laws* to persuade the citizens on a mass scale to accept beliefs and values which he believes are necessary for a well-functioning and virtuous society.

In this section, I will argue that Socratic self-knowledge and artful rhetoric can be used to benefit and enhance a democratic society, rather than undermining it. Socratic self-knowledge as a social value may help answer Plato's epistemic and cultural worries about the average citizen and their capacity for reason. Encouraging citizens to be aware of the extent and limits of their own knowledge need not discourage them from participating in complex discussions about politics and policy. Instead, it may encourage them to participate more carefully, thoughtfully, and with more openness toward the knowledge of others. While Plato utilizes artful rhetoric as a tool of the epistemic elite to guide the beliefs and perspective of the masses, it may just as easily be used to inform the masses about complex topics and issues to make participation in political discussion more accessible.

A Socratic democracy, as I shall call it, would combine Socratic self-knowledge as a social value, artful rhetoric, and respect for the process of shared deliberation and each citizen's role in it. A democracy whose culture highly values shared deliberation, rather than individualized expression of opinion, would be more able to achieve stability, coherence, and justice through an appreciation of the shared responsibility to participate in the collective political process. Socratic self-knowledge, then, rather than dealing a deathblow to collective non-expert deliberation, can instead contribute to a well-functioning deliberative democracy.

It is true that Plato seems to have little faith in the ability of the many to make good decisions in general. There are instances, however, where Plato indicates that he believes in the average citizens' ability to break free from the coercive force of popular opinion and undeserved self-certainty. For example, in the *Apology*, Plato implies that while the many may hold a false

belief, a potential antidote is honest engagement on the topic with their fellow citizens.[153] Early in Socrates' defense speech, he acknowledges that popular opinion about him is that he is a wise man who studies "things in the sky and below the earth; he makes the worse into the stronger argument, and he teaches these same things to others" (*Ap*. 19b4-c1). In order to dispel this popular falsehood about himself, he encourages the members of the jury to "tell each other if any one of you has ever heard me discussing such subjects to any extent at all" (19d1-2). In suggesting this, Socrates indicates that the many may have the ability to dispel a false belief by discussing it among themselves.

One may object that Plato does not in fact believe that the average citizen has this ability to break the hold of popular opinion in the *Apology* on the grounds that it obviously didn't work in Socrates' trial.[154] Socrates was convicted and then sentenced to death by an even greater margin. However, it is not likely that any of Socrates' 501 jurors could have meaningfully engaged with each other about what each of them knew about Socrates and the topics of his usual conversations. The Athenian court system did not have a designated deliberation period for jurors after hearing the arguments. If each juror is expected not to discuss the case with anyone else, but only mulls it over by themselves, it would be much more difficult for them to challenge or test their own beliefs, or to hold their own reasoning to account. Even with the aid of other co-deliberators, worthy deliberation requires honesty and awareness about what each deliberator knows and does not know. This way, each deliberator can hold each other accountable for their knowledge, point out unfounded assumptions, and refer to another's well-

[153] This is similar to the idea found in the *Alcibiades* that one may gain self-knowledge through conversation. There, engaging with the wisdom of another through conversation is enough to put us on the path to self-knowledge, though perhaps not enough to achieve it.

[154] There is a further worry that Plato consistently disparages the ability of crowds to reason well. Even in the *Apology* itself, Socrates claims to believe that if he had lived a life of politics he would have already been killed long ago because he would not placate to the crowd and instead would say and do what is noble and good (*Ap*. 31d-e). However, Socrates here is asking the members of the crowd to engage with each other as individuals instead of acting as a crowd.

informed opinion for addressing particular issues. In this case, as Socrates suggests, the people who have witnessed Socrates' conversations should inform those who have not about the nature of those conversations. Those who have not witnessed them should value this evidence as more reliable than the unfounded rumors and hearsay which they may be relying on. In this way, those who know can help those who do not know to understand particular facts and, therefore, to deliberate more clearly about the wider issue. The fact that the Athenian court system did not allow for this kind of engagement among the jurors does not mean that they are incapable of it.

Socrates may believe that speaking to a relatively knowledgeable neighbor may help one to reach an understanding about facts or observable occurrences in the world. But does he believe this type of non-expert collaboration is beneficial in general? Socrates' preferred mode of philosophical investigation, the *elenchus*, suggests that he does. As I argued in chapter 1, part of the point of the *elenchus* may be to bring the interlocutor closer to a state of Socratic self-knowledge by showing them that they do not know what they think they know about a particular topic – especially concerning virtue.[155] If we take the claims of Plato's Socrates seriously about not knowing anything worthwhile (*Ap*. 21a1-5, b2-4, d2-4) and the importance of discussing the most important things for human life (*Ap*. 38a3-6), we may come to three conclusions: (1) Socrates has some awareness of what he knows and does not know regarding worthwhile topics, (2) he believes himself to be a non-expert in worthwhile topics, and (3) he believes there is some benefit in discussing the most important things with non-experts.

A further outcome of the *elenchus* seems to be to prevent Socrates' interlocutors from acting on their mistaken beliefs. For instance, once Socrates has revealed to Crito that escaping from prison is not as morally acceptable as he may have thought, the expectation is that he will

[155] Rappe (1995), for instance, argues that the goal of the Socratic examinations in the *Apology* is primarily to achieve self-knowledge in the examined. Rappe sees Socrates' experience with the oracle and subsequent realization of self-knowledge as an initial demonstration of the same elenctic method Socrates takes up for "transmitting his own realization to his interlocutors only by provoking a similar experience in them" (p. 7).

not only cease thinking that it is acceptable, but also cease trying to help Socrates escape.[156] Gaining awareness of specific mistaken beliefs may result in ceasing to think and act in those mistaken ways. However, Socrates does not seem to believe that anyone who has achieved epistemic self-awareness should cease discussing important subjects about which they lack expertise. After all, if anyone is close to having Socratic self-knowledge, it is Socrates, and he seems to believe it is his duty to discuss the most important things every day with nearly everyone he meets. Socrates often claims to know nothing of great importance, and yet he constantly engages others in discussions about the most important things. Further, he encourages them to continue inquiry into the very things about which they were shown to lack knowledge. There seems to be room, then, on Socrates' view, for non-expert engagement with important subjects, both to help themselves gain or develop knowledge and also to contribute to the development of knowledge in others.

As a self-aware non-expert, Socrates may not be able to steer others in the right direction the way a true expert could, but he may still be able to steer them away from wrong action. Just as Socrates' daimonion stops him from taking wrong action without urging him toward the right action, Socrates attempts to bring his interlocutors to an impasse regarding their mistaken thoughts without necessarily pointing them in the right direction. Socrates does not believe there are no true experts, but he does believe that there are many false ones – especially regarding virtue and politics. Socrates would not, for instance have much reason to doubt the sailor's knowledge of knots or the shoemaker's knowledge of leather. However, he would very likely examine the sailor's knowledge of virtue and the shoemaker's knowledge of politics. While he may object to the many attempting to teach virtue or politics, he would not object to the many

[156] The *Euthyphro* shows that this attempt to achieve epistemic self-awareness and to get others to cease actions based on mistaken beliefs does not always work. It may even be Plato's observation that the *elenchus* does not work so often that led him to shift from the Socratic method of individual examination to his own endorsement of mass persuasion in the middle and later political works.

teaching the particularities of their specific crafts.[157] In this way, the many political non-experts are able to contribute something of potential utility to a collective political deliberation.

Plato treats Socratic self-knowledge as inevitably leading to a strict socio-political hierarchy of expertise, but this need not be the case. Socratic self-knowledge is not simply deference to epistemic authority, but the awareness of what one knows and does not know. Such epistemic self-awareness should shape its possessor's dispositions about what they are qualified to pursue and how to go about pursuing it, but it need not lead to political rule of the epistemic elite.[158] There is nothing inherent in a society based on Socratic self-knowledge as described in the *Charmides* that requires any individual or group to have some overarching or architectonic knowledge of politics or the good itself. Socratic self-knowledge need not lead to self-imposed exclusion from politics for political non-experts. It could just as well result in a more efficient, effective, and inclusive deliberative process within democratic institutions.

As I have argued, Plato's criticism of democracy is almost exclusively cultural and leaves many facets of democratic institutions and processes unexplored. However, if we combine the mental state of Socratic self-knowledge with Aristotle's view of democratic deliberation in *Politics* 3.8-11, a powerful form of democracy may be envisaged. By combining an awareness of the extent and limits of our own knowledge with an acknowledgement that others have specific knowledge which we lack, we will be better prepared to share and combine our knowledge and to reason well in order to better deliberate as a coherent unit.

On Aristotle's view, a democracy is a state ruled by the many. Since there tend to be

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[157] C.D.C. Reeve (1989) lays out six characteristics of expert knowledge in the *Apology*. Expert knowledge and craft knowledge are closely related insofar as possession of expertise allows one to teach what they know and explain the nature of the subject, and hence be able to withstand the *elenchus* (p. 37-38). Scholars tend to agree that Socrates knows all sorts of trivial things, even while claiming not to have important, worthwhile, or technical knowledge.

[158] Dahl (1998) argues that experts should not be ignored and should maybe have a special place in a democracy, but this does not necessarily mean that they should have special positions of power or political authority. Experts, he claims, should be listened to and respected as part of the democratic process, but not as the sole dictators of legislation and public policy. I will say more about the role of the expert in democracy later in this section.

more poor than rich in any given society, democracy tends to be rule by the poor (1279b35-1280a6). Their economic status is not the reason for their political power, unlike under oligarchy, in which wealth and property are the qualifications for political power.[159] Aristotle's justification of democracy requires stepping back from the qualifications and characteristics of each individual and considering the qualifications and characteristics of the group as an aggregate or collective. Rather than considering the practical wisdom, virtue, or property of each individual citizen, we must consider the practical wisdom, virtue, and property of the entire group together – each having a share, however small, to contribute. As he puts it "the many, of whom each individual is not a good man, when they meet together may be better than the few good, if regarded not individually but collectively, just as a feast to which many contribute is better than a dinner provided out of a single purse" (1281a42-1281b3). An epistemic pot-luck results in a higher likelihood of mutual benefit and satisfaction.

It tends to be better, Aristotle thinks, to gather a group together to judge music and poetry than to rely on a single judge, because, while each may only understand a piece, together they may understand the whole. This may be true conceptually, but this collective understanding does neither the group nor any individual members any practical good if they do not discuss it together. It may be true, for instance, that each person who has read Aristotle's *Politics* understands some aspect of it, but, if they never engage each other in conversation about it, none of them will be able to gain any better understanding of the overall work for themselves. They must shift from a collection of individuals, each with particular knowledge, to a collective with shared understanding. This shift from a mere cluster of individuals, each with their own distinct

[159] Aristotle still provides a defence of the legitimacy of democratic constitutions and institutions by means of property. If we consider the property of the entire class rather than of individuals, he argues, the relatively poor many have more property than the wealthy individuals occupying any specific office (*Politics* 1282a24-41). The underlying principle of oligarchy – that those who own more of the state have more stake in it and ought to have more say in its direction (1280a25-31) – is here democratically repurposed by expanding from the individual to the group.

pieces of knowledge, to a genuine collective with a shared combination of knowledge can be accomplished through reasoned discussion.

Aristotle argues that not only knowledge, but also other qualities, including moral qualities, can be combined in a group to make scattered and separate pieces into a cohesive whole. There is a worry that opening political offices to any citizen, rather than restricting them to the most virtuous or knowledgeable, will inevitably result in corruption, or at least poor execution of responsibilities. Again, Aristotle provides a potential answer, namely that the combination of the diverse but incomplete knowledge of the many will be as good or better than the knowledge of the expert (1282a12-17).[160] While none of the average citizens may be completely virtuous, or have complete understanding of political issues, or be able to reliably hold their own reasoning to account on their own, when they come together to make decisions as a collective, they can fill in knowledge gaps, object to faulty reasoning, bolster each other's virtues, and temper each other's vices.

However, if citizens without expert knowledge are to combine what they know in political deliberation, some degree of Socratic self-knowledge is required. Without something like Socratic self-knowledge at the foundation of the process of combining the incomplete knowledge of many non-experts, there would be little to stop people from claiming to know more than they know, or from being over-confident in their unfounded assumptions about a given topic. The combination of epistemic self-awareness with an acknowledgement that others have specific relevant knowledge which we lack will better prepare us to share and combine our knowledge, and hence to reason more efficiently and effectively and to deliberate as a coherent unit.

[160] Further, he argues, the non-expert who uses the product is a better judge of the product than the craftsman. The quality of a house, for instance, is better judged by the person living in it than the carpenter. We may here think of the frequent disconnect between the expert designers of computer software and the average computer user.

Epistemic self-awareness as a tool for self-correction in a discussion between non-experts is helpful for shared deliberation, but how does expert knowledge fit into this view? This is where Plato's conception of artful rhetoric from the *Phaedrus* comes into play. I discussed artful rhetoric in chapter 2, where I highlighted the description at *Phaedrus* 277b. There, Socrates explains that there are two main knowledge requirements for someone to engage in artful rhetoric: first, you must "know the truth concerning everything you are speaking and writing about" and how to divide it into kinds (277b5-6), and second, you must "understand the nature of the soul," including which kinds of speech are appropriate for each kind of soul (277b8-9). The first requirement addresses the expert knowledge of the subject. The awareness of one's own knowledge of a subject implies at least some level of epistemic self-awareness. The second requirement is perhaps better understood as a knowledge of psychology and persuasion. Knowledge of the soul and of which kinds of speech are appropriate for each type of soul implies that an awareness of persuasive strategies, ways of framing and presenting complex issues, is necessary for effective persuasion. An awareness of "kinds of souls" may be understood as simply knowing one's audience. Plato has in mind a much more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the human psyche, but in the most practical terms, one must understand why it may not always be effective to explain a complex topic to a group of engineers, a group of artists, and a group of athletes in the same way.

Artful rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* does not aim to teach the audience, but only to persuade them to accept true opinions. Rather than benefiting the audience by producing in them knowledge, the artful orator aims to benefit them by persuading them to believe what is true. This sort of persuasion is still seen as conferring a genuine benefit. It also requires the same level of expert knowledge of the orator as is demanded of the teacher. We may think of the average person's understanding of physical health. I, for instance, believe that I should get rest and stay hydrated when I have a cold. This belief was passed to me early on partially via the phrase "feed

a cold, starve a fever". I believe this is true because doctors have told me that it helps the recovery process. I have some idea that rest allows my body to spend more energy on fighting off the illness, but I don't really know how or why it works. I think that it is a correct belief because the practice has seemed to help my recovery from illness more effectively than when I have tried to ignore my illness and keep up my usual activities and work routine. In other words, I lack the sort of account for my correct belief that would constitute knowledge on Plato's view, and instead have been convinced by those with epistemic authority. While informed consent is necessary for ethical medical practice, this does not always require teaching in the strict sense of producing knowledge in the patient. In the case of treating a cold, the patient does not need knowledge of the immune system and how it interacts with viruses, but they do need correct beliefs about how someone with that knowledge would act in order to treat their illness.

In chapters 2 and 3, I argue that Plato relies on the use of this artful rhetoric by his ideal political leaders to produce conviction in the citizenry about the structure of Kallipolis and Magnesia in the *Republic* and *Laws*. While there are important differences between the *Republic* and *Laws* in terms of means, ends, and political ideology endorsed by the characters, the goal of the artful orator in both works seems to be, on Plato's view, to justify the moral foundations of and social structure. This goal is accomplished by figures in positions of moral and political authority in both texts through various strategies like mythmaking, persuasive preludes to the laws, and moral education. Plato's consistent concern in both works is to cultivate popular deference to expertise, which tends to mean that experts make decisions and everyone else accepts those decisions. This is especially true in the *Republic*. But, by incorporating Socratic self-knowledge and Aristotle's description of the benefits of shared deliberation, there may be a

way to beneficially apply Plato's ideas about artful rhetoric to democratic deliberation, while respecting both expert and non-expert knowledge.

For the deliberative democracy I am proposing, Socratic self-knowledge is necessary for both the expert and non-expert. The non-expert, by understanding that they do not have the knowledge that the expert has, will be more prepared to accept the expert opinion in the interest of deliberating more clearly about the topic. But the expert, too, must be aware of where their expertise begins and ends. The expert will sometimes need to accept that they lack the relevant knowledge of the non-expert regarding real-world outcomes of public policy gained from lived experience. We may here think, for example, of the creation of the US interstate highway system. The efficiency of building highways through major cities for ease of access was never weighed against the effects it would have on the people who lived and worked in neighborhoods that were destroyed and cleared to make way for highway construction.[161] The expert must be able to balance their own knowledge and the ability to persuade the audience of important information with the weight of all the partial and non-expert knowledge possessed by their audience in the broader community. The testimony of non-experts whose lives have been affected by past policy and will be affected by future policy must be given proper consideration in the deliberative process. Those non-experts must also be properly informed by experts in ways that they can best understand.

The combination of Socratic self-knowledge and artful rhetoric works to allow a

[161] In *Changing Lanes: Visions and Histories of Urban Freeways*, Joseph DiMento (2012) describes the process of designing and constructing US highways in the mid-20th century: "with little citizen participation apart from limited public hearings on specific routes, technical experts laid out plans for major transportation facilities. Those plans, which often included noncontested condemnation of and considerable alteration of the physical environment, were then implemented through standard routines by agency colleagues" (p. 146). The lack of community input on the project was not only the product of assumed epistemic authority of urban planners, but also racism, since many highway routes in cities across the country were drawn through black neighborhoods and business districts. The devastating impacts of the placement of highways in the 1950's and 60's on black urban communities would not be fully realized until the 1970's and 80's.

deliberative democracy to function well. In fact, it may be difficult to see how a democracy can function well without these Platonic foundations. Without the restraint provided by a sense of epistemic self-awareness to avoid overconfidence in one's own opinion or partial knowledge, or to resist the common tendency to overextend the boundaries of one's own expertise, there will be little productive communication during an attempt at shared deliberation. Unless experts can effectively communicate their knowledge to non-experts, there will be little genuine buy-in or ability to give properly applicable feedback. Mutually beneficial communication between experts and non-experts is essential for effective deliberative democracy, and this communication requires epistemic self-awareness.

3 Conclusion

I have argued that Socratic self-knowledge need not undermine democracy in the way Plato seems to believe it does. Indeed, I have argued, it may in fact benefit a political system based on broadly inclusive democratic deliberation. In the realm of practical action, a shared social value of avoiding overestimation of one's own knowledge, in general or in a specific subject, would likely prevent shoddy workmanship. In the realm of shared deliberation, this same value of epistemic self-awareness could prevent hasty decision making and encourage a more empathetic posture for hearing opposition to one's own views. Epistemic self-awareness, along with a shared goal of making the best decision, rather than winning a debate, could make collaboration, cooperation, and deliberation a more efficient and effective process.

Artful rhetoric must be wielded in a much less authoritative way under a democracy than in Plato's ideal political arrangement if a broad range of the population are meant to have the ability to deliberate effectively. Experts should be respected, and their assessments and opinions should be regarded as a reliable basis for deliberation. This may entail experts explaining things

to the lay person in a way which does not result in the audience attaining knowledge of the subject, but only correct beliefs. However, all political decisions require considering multiple perspectives, areas of concern and conflict, and intended and possible impacts. In my own view, there is no area of expertise that encompasses all aspects of political decision making, as Plato seems to believe there is in the *Republic* and to a lesser extent in the *Statesman*.[162] So, while experts should be highly regarded and their opinions respected, there is no reason in an inclusive deliberative system to allow an expert in, say, hydro-electric power to simply declare when and where a hydro power plant should be constructed, without experts in other areas and members of the affected community offering considerations and concerns regarding the environment, economy, housing, transit, and other areas.

I have tried to show, in chapter 3 that there is a deep connection between the artful rhetoric of the *Phaedrus* and the kinds of political persuasion portrayed in the *Republic* and the *Laws*. Plato is careful to show that genuine epistemic and moral authority is necessary to persuade the citizens of Kallipolis and Magnesia to accept the established social and political order and to act morally within that social and political context. Kallipolis is founded on the separation of social and political classes and the division of labor according to natural suitability and learned expertise. These foundational principles are reinforced by the use of a foundational myth in the form of the noble lie. The founders of the city, with their political and epistemic authority, create a useful lie in words to encourage the citizens of Kallipolis to understand each other as "family" and their land as their "mother," both of which must be respected and protected. They also create the myth of the metals, which metaphysically justifies the selection of

[162] Where the *Republic* posits philosopher-kings with complete epistemic authority, the *Statesman* posits the slightly less enormous "architectonic" knowledge. The main difference is that architectonic knowledge does not give the statesman the knowledge of how to do all relevant political tasks, but more of a managerial knowledge of the political direction and to whom to delegate the specific tasks.

citizens for each class and stresses the importance of maintaining a clear and consistent division of labor.

Magnesia has a far less strict socio-political hierarchy, but nonetheless Plato describes an education program designed to reinforce the foundational principles of the social structure. There, the elder and most virtuous citizens control the curriculum for moral education from infancy to adulthood. As I explain in chapter 3, the early moral education in Magnesia develops an association between virtue and happiness, and, therefore, a desire to act in accordance with virtue in order to achieve happiness. By ensuring that the citizens of Magnesia have a consistent set of moral values enforced and reinforced throughout childhood and into adulthood, the legislators are better able to know the souls of the citizens and how to appeal to them in the preludes. The preludes aim to persuade the citizens that the laws are justified by appealing to their common sense of morality, so that they will be more likely to accept and comply with the laws, thus upholding the established social order.

A democracy should be able to pursue the same sort of reinforcement of cultural values that Plato describes, but in a democratic way. Just as Plato's conception of artful rhetoric can be integrated into an inclusive deliberative democracy, moral and practical education is able to reinforce the values of inclusive deliberative democracy. We may gain theoretical and practical insights by looking to Plato's views on epistemic self-awareness and dialectic, but then creatively apply those insights in pro-democratic ways that encourage participation, inclusivity, and effective collective deliberation.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have argued that Socratic self-knowledge and artful rhetoric work together as two of the key elements of Plato's political theory. To conclude, I will explore some of the potential implications of these elements for further research, particularly their implications for work on democratic theory and collective deliberation in general. After laying out my arguments so far, I will then turn to the work of modern political philosophers and provide some very brief preliminary thoughts on how using Plato's insights for pro-democratic ends can respond to or further develop their theories. These preliminary thoughts for further research will include Thomas Christiano's conception of "free information," Jason Brennan's epistemological argument against democracy, Ian Shapiro's argument against direct democracy, Jason Stanley's views on propaganda in a democracy, and Danielle Allen's conception of "epistemic egalitarianism."

In the first chapter, I argue that Socratic self-knowledge is present throughout Plato's political works and is often associated with social role and political organization. This chapter is split into two broad categories, the earlier Socratic dialogues and the later works, which are sometimes considered more Platonic than Socratic. The *Apology*, *Alcibiades*, and *Charmides* are the focus of the first category. The *Apology* discusses self-knowledge in terms of Socrates' "human wisdom" which he describes as his reluctance to claim to know that which he does not know. This "human wisdom" is contrasted by what he refers to as "the most blameworthy ignorance" or the belief that one knows what they do not know. Socrates' self-knowledge in the *Apology* serves as part of the justification for his denial of really knowing anything worthwhile or teaching anything to anyone. The *Alcibiades* shifts the focus to how self-knowledge is achieved and why it is necessary for a political leader to possess. In order to achieve self-

knowledge, we should engage with other people in discussions about reason. By understanding that we are essentially our souls and not merely our bodies or the things which we possess, we are better able to consider how to care for ourselves. By understanding our own nature, we will be in a better position to properly care for others, which should be a main concern of political leaders. The *Charmides* takes the further step from the role of self-knowledge in political leaders to the role of self-knowledge at the societal level. Here Plato presents Socrates' dream society in which all members have knowledge of what they know and do not know. This society with widespread self-knowledge allows for maximally efficient and effective organization by ensuring that everyone pursues activities that they know about and are capable of and no one pursues activities for which they are unqualified.

The second part of the first chapter focuses on the *Republic*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*. The political organization in *Republic* reflects Socrates' dream society in the *Charmides*. In the *Republic*, Plato extends his idea of Socratic self-knowledge to develop the principle of specialization. This requires not only that all citizens have just one job, which ensures quality craftsmanship in all aspects of the society, but also, by extension, that only the very few members of the epistemic elite have any say in political decision making. The *Laws* features a less strict version of the principle of specialization, which allows for political participation from a wide range of citizens, each of whom will have other jobs as well. Instead, the political power of Magnesia is divided among a vast array of committees, councils, assemblies, offices, and courts. This separation of political power among a large swath of the population ensures that no one has too much political power and that the power that each member does have is limited in scope and that it is based, depending on the position, on their qualifications.

The *Philebus* and *Laws* shift from emphasizing the importance of self-knowledge to the importance of avoiding self-ignorance. The *Philebus* lays out three ways we can be ignorant of ourselves: over- or under-estimating ourselves regarding wealth, physical appearance or abilities, and virtue — especially wisdom (*Philb* 48c-49a). These three categories reflect the levels of the self in the *Alcibiades*: the soul, the body, and the material things which belong to us. Lacking this sort of self-awareness, Socrates claims, is a vice which makes us worthy of ridicule and more likely to make poor decisions. Similarly, the *Laws* lays out a concern for double ignorance in book 9. While single ignorance seems to simply be a lack of knowledge about a subject and can be the cause of wrongdoing, double ignorance combines a lack of knowledge on a particular topic with the mistaken belief that its possessor is an expert in that very topic. Double ignorance can also be the cause of trivial wrongdoing, but when combined with power, like political authority, it can be the cause of great wrongdoing.

I have defined Socratic self-knowledge as an epistemic self-awareness regarding the extent and limits of one's own knowledge. This particular type of epistemic self-awareness should result in epistemic humility, which in turn allows its possessor not only to be aware of the blind spots in their own knowledge, but also to heed the testimony of experts. The second element of Plato's political theory is virtuous persuasion, or artful rhetoric. I define artful rhetoric as a form of persuasion which does not include the intent to produce knowledge in the audience but only correct belief, and which requires the persuader to be an authority on the specific topic, as well as on the human soul in general and the souls of their audience in particular. This form of rhetoric allows the epistemic authority to guide the beliefs of an audience without having to teach every member of an audience, or to make each of them into experts themselves. In chapters two and three, I argue that Plato moves from a focus on cultivating genuine epistemic self-

awareness through the Socratic elenchus to a top-down assessment of the souls of citizens by experts in order to assign them roles. This assignment of roles requires the ability to persuade the citizens that the system of assessment is justified and the that the organization of the society is just.

In the second chapter, I lay out some of the key distinctions in Plato's thought regarding persuasion and how he argues for a virtuous form of persuasion, artful rhetoric. Plato distinguishes between teaching, which requires someone with knowledge to produce knowledge in the audience, and persuasion, which aims only to produce belief, which can be accomplished whether the persuader has knowledge of the subject or not. Knowledge must be true, and belief may be either true or false or somewhere in between. One of Plato's consistent concerns is the use of persuasion by those who do not know what they are talking about or who have unjust aims. The only way for persuasion to be done virtuously or artfully, then, is for the persuader to have three pieces of knowledge as outlined in the *Phaedrus*: knowledge of the subject matter, knowledge of the human soul in general, and knowledge of the souls of the audience they aim to persuade. This is a form of persuasion which aims to produce genuine benefit for the audience, even though it does not aim to properly teach them. I argue that Socrates engages in artful rhetoric in the *Phaedrus* when he uses myth to persuade Phaedrus of the nature of the human soul and the importance of caring for it.

In the third chapter, I show how Plato intends to use artful rhetoric as it is defined in the *Phaedrus* to persuade and organize the citizens in the *Republic* and *Laws*. Plato relies on the use of artful rhetoric mostly to support the cultural aspects of the societies he designs in his political works. I examine the noble lie, which I argue aims to achieve a state in which (1) all citizens understand what role they are best suited for in the society, so that (2) each citizen will only do

what they are best suited for and not pursue what they are not qualified to do well. This is accomplished by persuading the population of Kallipolis to accept the basic values of the social structure. The myth of the metals provides a "natural" explanation for how and why each citizen is placed into their social class. In the second half of the chapter, I argue that the *Laws* includes a similar attempt to cultivate social values that justify and reinforce the social and political structure. I argue that the persuasive preludes in the law code of Magnesia do not rely on strictly rational arguments to persuade the citizens to accept and comply with the laws. Instead, the preludes provide reasons to accept the laws as just and comply with them without always relying on reason alone. At the foundation of Magnesia is a lifetime of moral persuasion, from infancy well into adulthood. The result of this moral training is the citizens of Magnesia being inclined to understand the law code, which reflects the very moral lessons they have received throughout their life, as well-justified and morally correct. While both *Republic* and *Laws* rely on artful rhetoric, Kallipolis requires a set of philosopher-kings with absolute epistemic and political authority at the top of a strict hierarchy, Magnesia has a much more dispersed political authority without any single absolute epistemic authority.

In the fourth chapter, I argued that these two fundamental elements of Plato's politics, epistemic self-awareness and artful rhetoric, can be beneficially applied to a modern deliberative democratic system and does not necessarily lead to Plato's authoritarian technocracy. Widespread epistemic self-awareness would enhance an inclusively democratic deliberative process by encouraging all members to be aware of the extent and limits of their own knowledge. Both experts and non-experts are likely to have some relevant knowledge or lived experience to contribute to a deliberative process aimed at a fully or maximally complete understanding of the issue or proposed solution. It is important, on my view, for even experts to be aware that they do

not have complete knowledge of any topic; for instance, that there will be consequences to policy proposals that they have not considered or have not considered fully enough or with the same weight as ordinary citizens who will be directly affected by policy changes.

The correct use of artful rhetoric can also be beneficially adapted to democratic deliberation. Experts will need to be able to explain their expertise to non-experts to gain widespread basic understanding of important issues. Even if this does not produce – and indeed, does not aim to produce – knowledge in the majority of the citizen body, it is important for the majority of citizens participating in the deliberative process to have some grasp of the topic, while keeping in mind what they know and do not know about it. Just as Phaedrus cannot claim to fully understand the nature of the human soul from Socrates' Palinode, he can claim to grasp what the soul is like and come away with a better understanding than he started out with. This use of artful rhetoric will function less as Plato intends as a simple persuasion technique, but more as a way to distribute essential information for deliberation.

Plato's political theory is sometimes understood as an historical curiosity without much obvious practical application to our current social and political context. His vision of an aristocracy of the epistemic elite, which uses what may be considered manipulative methods of mass persuasion to gain the consent of the governed, is usually (and rightly) condemned in modern liberal democratic thought. However, Plato may be right to be concerned with cultural values as an essential part of a well-functioning and coherent political system. And taking Plato's epistemic critique of democracy seriously could help us diagnose and address real weaknesses in the design and execution of modern democratic systems. If we believe that democracy is the most just political structure, rather than dismissing these ancient objections to democracy as

simply anti-democratic and therefore not worth engaging, we will need to take them seriously, defend democracy from them, and strengthen democratic systems through this engagement.

The problem of extreme political polarization in modern liberal democracies today is sometimes attributed to the lack of a set of shared values common to all. This problem is sometimes expressed as "living in separate realities" in which, depending on which end of the political spectrum one finds oneself, either Nazis, communists, racists, anti-racists, Christian nationalists, or queer anarchists are in control of more and more of everyday life. These distinct and incompatible interpretations of the world are in turn often attributed to disagreements on basic facts, which arise due to the power of mainstream, decentralized, and social media. Every day we see and hear the divisive and dangerous results of the power of media conglomerates, independent conspiracy theorists, charlatans of the outrage economy, and internet algorithms to, on the one hand, anticipate and deliver whatever the consumer has been conditioned to desire to hear and see, and on the other hand, to progressively heighten those tendencies toward their extreme. While Plato's own political vision may prevent some of these polarizing outcomes and promote civic unity, this is only achieved through mass persuasion, which is not always respectful of the deliberate consent of the citizens or their capacity for reason.

I believe there are possible real-world benefits to taking Plato's critiques of democracy as posing a genuine challenge to defend against. There also may be benefits to incorporating pieces of Plato's political theory into a genuinely democratic system. I will suggest in this conclusion that, given the opportunity to deliberate together about public policy and have their decision taken seriously, people could participate in political deliberation with a higher level of thoughtfulness and good faith. Properly creating this opportunity would require not only institutional reforms, but broad changes to shared cultural values and social context. While these

possible political applications fall outside the scope of this dissertation, I think it is important to gesture toward some further conclusions as the basis for further research.

There are many problems with democratic action, including coordination, self-interest, disinterest, access to resources, and access to information. Even if all these problems are solved for each individual voter, voters will still lack important perspectives if they do not discuss the issue with their fellow citizens. I will be primarily concerned with the epistemic ability of the citizen body to deliberate over issues collectively and effectively. One worry facing modern liberal democracies is that systemic reforms since the 1960s to decentralize the democratic process and redistribute political power from exclusive parties to the voting public have coincided with rising voter alienation and disengagement, and with the rise of antiestablishment, demagogic candidates. While this does not imply a causal link, it does raise a concern about the effectiveness of these reforms for curbing feelings of alienation and disengagement. In what follows, I will explore some of the theoretical responses to our modern democratic context.

Like Plato, Jason Brennan (2022) makes an epistemological argument against democracy, claiming that "voters are ignorant, irrational, and misinformed" (p. 38). He further argues that the solution to the problems of democracy is not more democracy, and that some form of epistocracy may be preferable to democracy and produce better outcomes. Brennan proposes that citizens have a presumed right to not have their lives interfered with by incompetent decision-makers, including themselves (p. 37). He defends this view with an analogy. If a jury of incompetent people came to their decision "capriciously, out of ignorance, out of hate and spite, for selfish gain, or through some irrational thought process," Brennan argues, we would rightly say their decision was unjust and should not be upheld (p. 37). This is the basis for his competence principle: "Political decisions are presumed legitimate and authoritative only when produced by

competent political bodies in a competent way and in good faith" (Brennan, 2016, p. 156-7). Since democratic institutions are necessarily populated by incompetent people, democratic reforms must not be the answer.

The problem with Brennan's argument is the implied premise that juries tend to deliberate competently and rationally, but juries are selected out of the very group of people – voters – which Brennan dismisses as incompetent and irrational. Brennan seems to think that juries are capable of sound deliberation, since he argues that we would be right to reject a jury that deliberated poorly but does not argue that juries should be rejected in general. If this is true, there must be something about the deliberative process of the jury system, open to all registered voters, which allows them to deliberate well enough.

The assumption that the average citizen is incompetent and irrational and that better decisions will be made when more power is in the hands of the few experts aligns well with Plato's more extreme anti-democratic sentiments. Brennan's complete dismissal of democratic reforms is couched in a sort of common-sense language of objective reason and anti-dogmatism about democracy. But the suggestion that the very same group of people may in one high stakes context tend to make better decisions than in another high stakes context seems to imply that the problem is with the process, not with the people. The key difference seems to be that the people are able to discuss the facts and to reason about a particular issue together with fellow citizens before making a collective decision in the jury context, but not the general political context.

In *Responsible Parties: Saving Democracy From Itself* (2018), Ian Shapiro argues that proportional representation and efforts toward direct democracy, like ballot initiatives and referenda, are actually bad for democracy because they encourage polarization and have not produced wider participation or feelings of voter effectiveness. Ballot initiatives and referenda,

he argues, encourage voters to consider individual policy items in a vacuum, without taking into account related issues or further effects of the policy change. Shapiro describes the decentralizing political reforms of many Western democracies as "the political equivalent of bloodletting," insisting that they have no effect on the targeted issues and may even exacerbate them (p. 3). Instead, he argues for systems with only two strong political parties, rather than multiple, weak parties.

By "strong parties," Shapiro means parties in which full members have internal control of the party platform, policy goals, and selection of candidates. Weak parties allow for open primaries, caucuses, or conventions in which non-members are able to influence the party platform, policy goals, and candidates. Multiple decentralizing reforms in the United States throughout the 20th century aimed to open the political process to the grassroots, including popular election of party candidates rather than selection from party bosses, and primary elections open to non-party members. It has been argued that these reforms have allowed political outsiders and figures on the party fringe, such as Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders, to use the party infrastructure to rise to national power.

Shapiro argues that political parties have two main advantages over the broader public when it comes to making decisions. First, political parties have a long-term view of politics and policy consequences which the wider voting public simply lacks. Second, strong political parties are able to bundle issues together to create a cluster of interests to be considered at once rather than voting on a single issue at a time. The first advantage again reflects Plato's description of the political capacity of the average citizen. That is, the voting public is understood as short-sighted and tends not to consider the consequences of policy change. The second advantage of

strong parties addresses the problem that ballot initiatives and referenda encourage voters to consider a single issue without reflection on related issues.

However, Shapiro assumes that direct democratic initiatives must lack prior collective deliberation by the voters. It is assumed that voters, if they are going to vote on policy directly, cannot speak to each other about the issues, how they will be affected, what further plausible effects a policy might have, etc. The assumption, in other words, is that each voter will consider the policy proposal in a vacuum of context and as an atomic individual. And this very well may be the case without infrastructure in place which encourages people to explore diverse perspectives and even opposing opinions. Without effort to get voters to engage with each other, and without information and expertise, voters will be left to rely on partisan, sensational, or otherwise misleading popular media.

For Plato, the citizen fully actualizes their role in society when they self-consciously act in accordance with their political knowledge. Plato takes this to mean that anyone who lacks political expertise should remove themselves from political decision making entirely. This is based on his lack of faith in the deliberative capabilities of the average citizen and their tendency toward instant gratification. These are valid concerns about democracy, but, as I have argued in chapter 4, they provide little reason to dismiss it entirely, or to assume that Platonic values cannot be positively applied to an inclusive deliberative politics. Building a democratic culture which takes as its foundational principles the Socratic value of epistemic self-awareness is essential to a well-functioning deliberative democracy. As Socrates states in the *Apology*, "it is the greatest good for a man to discuss virtue every day" (*Ap*. 38a3), whether, like him, they claim to know nothing worthwhile, or, like many of his interlocutors, they claim to know the most important things already.

Plato uses tools like the myth of the metals in the *Republic* and the preludes in the *Laws* in connection with early moral education to gain widespread acceptance from the citizenry of

the socio-political structure of his ideal and maximally well-functioning states. If coherence of social values is necessary for any well-functioning society, but individual freedom to adhere to one's own personal values is essential to democracy, a problem seems to arise when a democratic state aims to instill values in the citizenry. However, it cannot be the case that every attempt to instill any value in the population of a democratic society is necessarily anti-democratic. Carol Pateman (1970), for example, argues that in order to have a maximally well-functioning participatory democracy, many spheres of human life must be democratized beyond what is normally thought of as political.[163] This includes the workplace, social clubs, and schools, among others. Expanding democracy and bringing it into the culture of everyday life will tend to produce a well-functioning democracy because its citizens are well-practiced in democracy. Practicing democratic deliberation in social clubs, schools, and workplaces may help foster a greater understanding of the rules of democratic deliberation in general and lead to greater participation and better execution of shared deliberation in democratic politics. Just as we become builders by building, we become democrats by participating in democracy.

Plato sometimes points to the possibility of becoming a better deliberator in general by deliberating about particular things. For example, in the *Statesman* we find this exchange:

> Visitor: Suppose someone should ask us about the children sitting together learning their letters: when one of them is asked of what letters some word or other is composed, do we ever say that the inquiry is more for the sake of the one problem set before him or for the sake of his becoming a better speller in all such cases?
> Young Socrates: Clearly for the sake of his becoming a better speller in all such cases.
> Visitor: Now again what about our inquiry about the statesman? Is it posed more for the sake of that thing itself [the statesman] or for the sake of our becoming more dialectical about everything?
> Young Socrates: This too is clear, that it's for the sake of our becoming more dialectical about everything. (*Statesman* 285c8–d9)

Socrates often suggests at the end of dialogues that his interlocutors, having failed to define

[163] *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970), especially p.42-43. Pateman traces this idea of social training back to Dahl (1956), who considers it in more general terms of cultivating a coherent set of norms in a society.

their area of supposed expertise, will be more productive in future similar inquiries and examinations.

A.G. Long (2013) argues that at least part of the point of interpersonal philosophical conversation in Plato's dialogues is to become better solo thinkers. Philosophers, he argues, are able to provide themselves with opposition and are able to "speak from a variety of different perspectives, without external aid" (p. 6).[164] Interpersonal communication is a kind of training for intrapersonal dialogue, which is how Plato sometimes describes thought, especially in the *Theaetetus*, *Sophist* and *Statesman*. Becoming a better solo thinker may be a real result of interpersonal philosophical conversation, but this does not mean it is the entire point of such conversation. Griswold (1986), for instance, argues that interpersonal philosophical conversation is necessary for philosophers to avoid falling into dogmatism and to discover new ideas.[165] While Socrates is no democrat, the principle of regularly interacting with others in reasoned dialogue need not be anti-democratic. In fact, it may be a necessary aspect of democracy.

By participating in shared deliberation with members of groups that we would otherwise rarely come into contact with, we will be exposed to objections and views that would normally only be affirmed by our fellow in-group members. This not only benefits us by fostering better deliberation, but also allows us to see the flaws in our own habits of thought. Confrontation with these kinds of objections and recognition of the flaws in our habits of thought may have the

[164] Long argues that this is not necessarily true throughout Plato's corpus, but only once the idea of internal dialogue is introduced, particularly *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*.
[165] Long (2013) connects this discovery and assessment of new ideas to the role of visiting foreign cities in the *Laws* for political experimentation (p. 140-141). However, as he notes, this interaction between cities is not necessarily philosophical so much as empirical.

effect of producing more epistemic humility and more appreciation for the views of other groups.

In *How Propaganda Works* (2015), Jason Stanley examines some ways in which openness toward other groups can be established even without direct interaction, since direct interaction with other groups is not always possible because of long distance or language barriers. Rather than a top-down attempt to reign in the masses, Stanley prescribes a bottom-up effort to instill social understanding. This can be achieved mainly through the arts, particularly art created by marginalized members of the society (e.g. W.E.B. Du Bois' literature portraying Black people as fully human, rather than simpler or stereotypical caricatures). This can also be achieved more directly through efforts to physically integrate the disparate groups of a society. Programs like bussing in the US have benefited the affected students not only academically, but also behaviorally and economically. The further effect is humanizing groups that members would otherwise have very limited contact with. The goal of integrating otherwise disparate groups within a society for activities requiring collective deliberation would be not only to facilitate a more humanized and understanding view of the other groups, but also to break up the echo chambers that we tend to unwittingly create for ourselves, and instead allow ourselves to learn from the knowledge and perspectives we would not normally interact with.

In the *Gorgias*, Socrates claims that he is "the only one among our contemporaries—to take up the true political craft and practice the true politics," specifically because he challenges people's knowledge claims rather than affirming them (521d8-9).[166] Socrates here positions himself in opposition to the flatterers who use rhetoric to curry favor among the citizens, rather than using philosophical dialogue to persuade them to care about the best possible state of their

[166] Socrates goes on to explain that "This is because the speeches I make on each occasion do not aim at gratification but at what's best. They don't aim at what's most pleasant" (521d8-e3).

soul. One of the great problems with tyrants is that they surround themselves with flatterers. The problem with flatterers is that their affirmations are antithetical to deliberation. They create an echo chamber reinforcing what the tyrant already believes, severely inhibiting the development of epistemic self-awareness. This kind of over-confidence in our own understanding of the world will inevitably affect how we conduct ourselves in shared deliberation, since we will over-estimate our own knowledge and quickly dismiss the knowledge of others. For this reason, flattery and unreflective affirmation, as well as the resulting epistemic over-confidence, can be considered democratic vices.

Another democratic vice may be epistemic over-confidence in the sense of political cynicism. Epistemic over-confidence of this kind does not prompt its possessor to dominate the conversation with their unfounded opinions, or to overlook relevant information from others. Instead, the hubris of the cynic entails the belief that one understands their own socio-political context so completely as to "know better" than to attempt any improvement on it or participation in it at all. The cynical defeatist rejects political participation as blindly optimistic and foolish. By noting all the ways in which democratic politics fails to produce positive change, the cynic reinforces their position that participation itself is useless. Pateman's suggestion to expand democratic opportunity beyond the explicitly political further expands the opportunities to see democratic effects in more areas of everyday life, which may help to address some of the cynic's concerns regarding the effectiveness of democratic processes in general. A Socratic democracy would aim to use institutions of collective deliberation to develop the virtues of collective deliberation and political decision making. This contrasts with Plato's aim to use similar institutions to distinguish the epistemic elite from others and to concentrate political power in the hands of political experts.

But the creation of deliberative institutions for voters isn't enough to address voter alienation and polarization. There must also be a social motivation aimed at cultivating pro-

democratic values of collaborative (rather than adversarial) deliberation, inclusive participation, and epistemic self-awareness. If we lack the awareness that we are each lacking important perspectives on any issue, even if we are an expert in the field, we will not have incentive to value or seriously consider the perspectives we engage with.

There are many practical reasons to incentivize inclusive and diverse policy discussions among average citizens. This sort of program may encourage new alliances within communities among members previously assumed to have little in common. Consider, for example, domestic and new immigrant renters. Framing the relationship between community members in terms of housing expenses rather than primary language or religion will highlight similar interests rather than seemingly insurmountable differences. Discussing policy with average members of one's own community may also make it more obvious when politicians and media personalities attempt to make an exclusive issue seem more widespread. Take for instance the federal estate tax in the US. Less than 1% of the people who die each year will have accumulated enough wealth in their lifetime for their estate to be affected by the estate tax, but there was fairly popular push to abolish the tax by relabelling it the "death tax" and creating the appearance of its widespread application.[167] Encouraging dialogue with a diverse group of fellow citizens about particular political issues can also help citizens draw on diverse experiences with law and policy and therefore consider impacts of policy change beyond our own direct experience to supplement the decision making process.[168]

In *Justice by Means of Democracy* (2023), Danielle Allen argues that there are five necessary facets for a well-functioning democratic process. The most relevant for my purposes

[167] For statistics on who pays the federal estate tax, see The Center for Budget and Policy Priorities "The Estate Tax: Myths and Realities" (2007).
[168] Josiah Ober makes a similar argument in his *Democracy and Knowledge* (2008), especially p. 36-37, 95-97.

here is the third, what Allen calls "epistemic egalitarianism." Epistemic egalitarianism is a process by which a group of people gather and sort knowledge from both experts and the lived experience of non-experts for making decisions. Achieving epistemic egalitarianism requires "processes that unite experts and laypeople in strong partnerships so that decisions can be made based on the whole citizenry's knowledge banks" (p. 36). If either the expert or non-expert side of the decision-making process is missing, there will be an epistemic and, therefore, political power imbalance which not only weakens the democratic legitimacy of the system, but also weakens the quality of the deliberative process. Democratic legitimacy is weakened because of the basic democratic premise that the citizens should have a say in their own governance. The deliberative process is weakened because of the absence or diminished presence of expert knowledge or everyday experience to guide the process. While not everyone will always have a relevant contribution to make to such deliberations, accessibility to, and accountability for, the deliberative process is essential, on Allen's view, for a just democratic institution to block monopolies on power (p. 90).

The ability of experts to persuade groups of ordinary citizens to accept a set of facts, a line of reasoning, or a spectrum of predictable outcomes will be necessary for such a shared deliberative process to produce effective results. They will have to use something like the artful rhetoric explored in chapter 2. For the ordinary citizens to be receptive, they will need to have at least some epistemic self-awareness, which I discuss throughout this dissertation. Thomas Christiano, in "Enabling Informed and Equal Participation" (2022), argues for a certain amount of "free information" available to all citizens to prevent "manipulation, deception, and fruitless search for further information" (p. 425). Without this base level of information on the topic of

discussion, there is no way to know what one knows and does not know. This basic lack of entry-level information halts the deliberative process before it has a chance to begin.

In a way, Christiano's position of requiring the dissemination of "free information" aligns with Brennan's view outlined above. Christiano does not believe that voters are *necessarily* ignorant and irrational the way that Brennan seems to assume. However, making certain types of political information free may mean that he accepts the position that a certain amount of "sophistication" about politics is necessary for political participation. How sophisticated must the ordinary citizen be for democratic deliberation to be effective? How can the necessary information be disseminated?

Recognizing that experts have an important role to play in the epistemic health of democratic institutions and especially the deliberative process, Allen emphasizes that expertise is most effective when combined with a well-educated public. This means that her conception of epistemic egalitarianism is not unwarrantedly optimistic about the inherent epistemic capacity of the average citizen. Instead, education must be understood as a highly valuable public good in a well-functioning democracy (p. 41). While education is commonly seen as a right in democratic countries, it is not always treated as an important public good or social asset. Education of the public is foundational to the project of democratic deliberation.

Creating democratic institutions is one side of a well-functioning system, but a pro-democratic culture requires pro-democratic values. If citizens do not see the value of shared deliberation, the opportunity to access the political decision-making process will not be incentive enough to participate. Christiano (2022), Pateman (1970), and Allen (2023) agree that social conditions are essential to the effective participation of citizens in democratic institutions. The sites for these social conditions include schools, workplaces, and social groups which incentivize

gaining information necessary for political deliberation and make access to that information efficient and intuitive.

There are many directions for future research regarding the social conditions required and best suited for well-functioning democratic deliberation. I believe there is work to be done in exploring how the Platonic social and political virtue of epistemic self-awareness and the Platonic ideal of the proper use of artful rhetoric can be utilized for democratic ends. Introducing these ideas in early education and developing and sustaining them in social contexts through adulthood may help to foster a more inclusively democratic and more inclusively deliberative culture. There are problems, not only of institutional design to implement these ideas, but also due to the potential contradiction between democratic self-governance and the deliberate creation of social values. As I point out in chapter 3, the creation of institutions to instill cultural values which uphold the social structure can easily be seen as mass manipulation of the population. This will be a major issue to explore in further work on the topic of democratic culture.

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